

THE RISKS AND REWARDS OF SELECTING VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

BY

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WHITNEY LAURINE COURT

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Abstract

This research focuses on the effectiveness of employing political maneuvers meant to target a specific segment of the electorate in order to acquire their support. As political polarization increases in American politics, it forces cleavages between subgroups within the electorate that campaigns and candidates must address. In an effort to better understand the effectiveness of these targeted appeals, I examine the risks and rewards associated with selecting vice presidential running mates in an effort to target subgroups within the party who are otherwise likely disenfranchised by the party's presidential nominee. Previous studies which attempt to address the influence of vice presidential nominees on voters treat vice presidential candidates in the aggregate, either pooling them within each election year and/or across years, and the results are mixed. Some research finds that vice presidential nominees have minimally positive influences on voters while other evidence depicts vice presidential candidates as simply not impacting voters. However in my research, I argue that by design existing studies fail to adequately depict the influence of vice presidential candidates. Instead I advocate for an approach that focuses on the electoral risks and rewards of targeting specific factions within the constituency. Through this reappraisal of the field, I believe we gain a more solid understanding of the role vice presidential candidates play in presidential elections and perhaps most importantly the effectiveness of utilizing campaign techniques which wish mobilize specific subgroups within the electorate.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Presidential campaigns feel constant pressure to broaden their electoral appeal beyond their more natural political tendencies. One illustration of this was the 1960 presidential election. At the time, the South was heavily concerned with maintaining their states' rights and was fervently against civil rights legislation. The South was notorious for not trusting politicians that did not share their stance and Southern way of life. All throughout the Democratic Party's nomination season, it became increasingly clear that John Kennedy had little chance of gaining the support of the South. Instead they backed their 'favorite son', Lyndon B. Johnson. When Kennedy won the party's nomination, he knew he would need Southern support in order to win the general election.

As a youthful New Englander, Kennedy had very little in common with the older Senate Majority Leader from Texas. Kennedy's long-time assistant, Evelyn Kennedy described the relationship between Kennedy and Johnson as one "which never had been close, often had been cool and, at times, had been deeply hostile" (1968, 2). Nevertheless, Kennedy selected Johnson as his vice presidential running mate. He hoped Johnson would deliver the Southern states.

Although the circumstances were different, the 2008 presidential campaign presented a similar quandary. John McCain's long career of reaching across political boundaries created an obstacle for him. He soon found himself struggling to engage the support of the conservative base. McCain knew he would need conservatives' campaign resources and votes in order to have a chance at beating Barack Obama in the general election. However, he was not able to undo his long-standing reputation as a "maverick" politician with prospective conservative

voters. Instead of solely attempting to appeal to conservatives on his own merit, McCain choose to take a gamble. He selected the relatively unknown Sarah Palin as his vice presidential running mate.

On paper, the two politicians were an unlikely match. John McCain had a long list of accomplishments throughout his military and congressional career and was well known for his independently-minded political maneuvers. Sarah Palin was an unknown governor from Alaska and had very little ties to Washington insiders or ample experience in elected office. Most surprisingly, she was a strong conservative on nearly every issue. Following her selection, she proudly dissented from the McCain campaign's message on social issues including abortion and stem cell research.¹ She justified this diversion from the larger campaign by stating, "when you're running for office, your life is an open book and you do owe it to Americans to talk about your personal opinion, which may end up being different than what the policy in an administration would be" (Gibson and Palin 2008). Under any other circumstance these two politicians would have very little in common. However, John McCain needed conservative support and was willing to risk his reputation for potential electoral gain.

This contradictory behavior leads us to ask, why would politicians decide to pander to the kind of politics they advocated so strongly against? Why did Kennedy, who prided himself in being the new face of politics, select a vice presidential nominee who personified the old smoke-filled backroom politics? Why did McCain, who had decades of experience overcoming party-

¹ During her ABC interview with Charles Gibson, Palin openly discussed the differences she had with McCain on key social issues like abortion. While McCain supported abortion rights in the case of rape and incest, Palin's views were far more conservative. She shared with Gibson that she felt abortion should only be legal when the life of the mother was threatened. She also diverged from McCain's stance that embryonic stem cell research should be legal.

pressures, select a running mate that was the epitome of a polarizing social conservative? These pressures and related efforts to appeal to factions within the party are not simply limited to the 1960 and 2008 presidential election contexts. More often than not, campaigns are faced with the challenge of uniting ideological factions within the electorate.

By design the American political system encourages the winnowing of political interests into two dominant parties (Duverger 1972). With the presence of two parties, varied political interests across the electorate are not necessarily encompassed within the existing options. As issues are placed on the political agenda, the potential also rises for factions to develop within each party. For instance throughout the Civil Rights Movement the Democratic Party experienced great pressure to avoid creating rifts between its Southern more conservative members and the remaining members of the party. Additionally the Democratic Party, being long-known as attracting a variety of disenfranchised and minority groups, constantly struggles with balancing the varied interests of their members. More recently as our nation moved into the 21st century, the Republican Party also struggles to maintain ties between its more moderate members versus the growing number of conservatives (Abramowitz, 2011).

These developing factions are especially likely to emerge during the presidential primary and caucus season. During this time, members of the parties debate and vote on whom they believe would best represent their party during the general election. Voters are invited to openly voice the direction they would like the larger party to move through selecting the candidate that appeals to them. It is the principal goal of the primary and caucus season to decide on one candidate to represent the party in the general election. This goal has the potential to leave dissonance between disenfranchised members and the party's selection.

Once the nominee is selected, it then becomes a challenge for the campaign to attract the members of the party and independently minded voters who did not initially support their bid for the presidency. For instance following a fervently fought primary battle between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, and only days before the nominating convention, a Pew Research Center poll indicated that 28% of Clinton supporters claimed they would not vote for Obama in the general election (2008). Candidates may find their campaigns challenged to reach a variety of potential voters that are therefore less natural for them to entice. Candidates must decide how to send messages to the electorate that will be the most lucrative in bringing votes to their ticket.

Presidential candidates use various techniques to encourage support, including advertisements, personal appearances, and get-out-the-vote efforts. However, campaigns must also consider whom they will target with these gestures. Once a campaign determines which states are likely to be critical in their quest to win the Electoral College, they must then decide how they will approach the campaign within these critical areas. They can either choose to target members of the electorate in their party's base, who are likely predisposed to the campaign's message, or they can focus on members of the electorate who are considered undecided swing voters. Both tactics have potential risks and rewards.

Employing particular campaign tactics designed to secure the party base runs counter to what many theorists claim is in the typical politician's best electoral interests. Black (1948) and Downs (1957) advocated economic spatial models of candidate and voter behavior. According to these models, it should be in the best interests of political candidates to gravitate towards the

median voter.² They contend that in an effort to win the support of the median voter, candidates should focus their campaigning around a more moderate message.

In theory, voters near the median will rationally vote for the candidate whose message is closest to their own beliefs. Although candidates may need to expend more resources to gain the support of the median voter, as they will need to both persuade and mobilize these moderate voters (Holbrook and McClurg 2005), the electoral benefits of gaining median support is potentially considerable (Hillygus and Shields 2008). The voters located at the extremes will then vote for the viable candidate located closest to them on the ideological spectrum because as Downs states, “It is always rational *ex definition* to select a greater good before a lesser, or a lesser evil before a greater; consequently abstention would be irrational because it increases the chances of the worse party for victory” (1957, 119). Campaigns operating under these tactics are referred to as risk-seeking candidates because they are willing to diverge from their party’s base supporters (Cox and McCubbins 1986; Chen and Reeves 2011).³

Conversely, risk-adverse candidates focus their campaign’s attention on their own party’s base (Cox and McCubbins 1986; Chen and Reeves 2011). Candidates seeking such a strategy worry about same-party voters becoming disenchanted with a candidate espousing moderate positions in an attempt to gain the support of the median voter. Converse (1966) refers to voters sitting out an election because they do not closely identify with a same-party candidate as

² Jessee (2010) shows that the median voter in the 2008 presidential election was located in the middle of the traditional liberal/conservative ideological scale, with an ideology much closer to that of self-reported independents than to either Republicans or Democrats.

³ One illustration of this phenomenon was Bill Clinton’s migration towards the middle in the 1990s, where he successfully ran for two terms on a more centrist platform and policy record, while maintaining the support of the Democratic Party’s base.

“abstention due to alienation”. Peress (2011) argues that, while some candidates do choose to engage in strategies centered on securing the base rather than the median, economic models of voting suggest that such base-oriented strategies can be electorally costly. As candidates work to secure their party’s base, they risk alienating voters located near the center.

Peress’s concerns about alienating moderate voters may not be as vital as once thought if we consider the decision-making characteristics of both partisans and independents. Research suggests that partisans process campaign information differently than independents, giving campaigns a chance to target partisans and independents through different campaign strategies. Partisans seek, process, and retain political information differently than independents (Delli, Carpini, and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992). They are less likely to abstain due to alienation in part because they are more likely to reject information they find in disagreement with their political beliefs (Fischle 2000; Zaller 1992). If a candidate pursues a more moderate message, partisan voters are more likely to reject this information if it is in conflict with their previously held beliefs about the candidate (Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh 1989). This is less likely to be true for independents. In order for a campaign to mobilize independents, they must first find a way to persuade them (Holbrook and McClurg 2005). Therefore mobilizing independents consumes more resources than focusing on the party base and potentially involves more risk.

Additionally, Jesse contends that finding ways to reinforce and activate extreme voters can be electorally beneficial because “campaign donations, volunteering, or other sources of assistance tend to come from more ideologically extreme voters”, therefore providing candidates with incentives to polarize and activate their base (2010, 206). These resource incentives, both in the sense that campaigns may be able to conserve resources and also bring in more as a result of targeting partisans, may lead candidates towards a more ideologically extreme campaign

message. Is it possible to appeal to more extreme voters in the base through one set of campaign messages, while still pursuing votes near the middle? An examination of the existing literature on message receptivity signifies that this indeed could be possible.

Research suggests that the challenge in appealing to and maintaining both moderate voters and party loyalists may be reduced if a candidate's message is perceived differently by divergent subsets of the electorate. While campaigns may not easily produce a change of perception amongst voters towards candidates, they can serve to "activate partisanship and mobilize core supporters" (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Finkel 1993; Holbrook and McClurg 2005, 689). Earlier studies showed that campaigns reinforced voters existing views, especially during an era when people associated more strongly with social groups. Building on these early studies, Finkel examined both individual and aggregate level data to compare two models, one designed to test for campaign activation effects and one to examine whether conversion is likely. Finkel agrees campaigns do not likely change voters' intentions, but instead they "activate existing political predispositions and make them electorally relevant" (1993, 3).

In sum, campaign tactics may not change voters' political opinions; however, it is likely they could impact voter turnout if the right predispositions are triggered. This means campaigns may be able to have their messages positively received by some groups predisposed to the message, while leaving those less inclined towards the rhetoric largely unaffected. This, in turn, has the potential to alter electoral results. Now it is imperative that we understand how campaigns send messages to these groups in order to better comprehend their targeted impact.

Campaigns can choose to send messages to the electorate either implicitly or explicitly. The first option, implicit messaging, sends an unspoken or implied message to potential voters (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002; Mendelberg 2001; Campbell

and Monson 2008; Albertson 2011). Coded and implicit messages are designed to register with certain subgroups while going largely unnoticed by others. When sending these messages, campaigns hope to influence the opinions and behavior of their targets, while not affecting others within the electorate. Mendelberg (2001) argues that candidates often realize this power, and she identifies the use of implicit racial messages used in campaigns to shape whites' attitudes towards political rivals. She illustrates this through the example of George H.W. Bush's Willie Horton commercials. Mendelberg argues, "the Bush campaign used the racial facts of the case intentionally – though subtly – as part of the overall strategy to recruit white voters without drawing the "racist" label" (2001, 142). The images in this advertisement were designed to implicitly manipulate white voters based on underlying racial stereotypes of criminals and Mendelberg shows that these appeals were effective in turning white voters against Dukakis.⁴

While implicit messages are designed to be concealed, campaigns may also send explicit messages to subsets of the electorate. Existing research on the effects of explicit partisan cues, including campaign visits and television advertisements, focuses mostly on the persuasive power of the messages and fails to differentiate between persuasion and mobilization effects (West 2001). While this allows us to better understand opinion formation, it does not necessarily indicate changes in electoral behavior. Holbrook and McClurg (2005) begin to fill this void in the literature, showing that campaign activities designed to target partisans, including transfers of national party money to state and local party organizations, positively affected partisan mobilization. More general campaign advertisements had little influence on partisans but they

⁴ The commercial featured Willie Horton, a convicted murderer serving a life sentence. While released on a Dukakis-supported furlough program, Horton raped a white woman and beat her fiancé. Numerous polls at the time indicated that this message resonated with voters, particularly white voters.

did find independents more likely to turnout based on these ads. This lends support to the idea that it is possible for campaigns to differentiate explicit campaign messages.

The aim of this research is twofold. First it is to add to our understanding of campaigns' abilities to send differentiated messages to factions within the electorate. Secondly, it sets out to analyze the role vice presidential candidates play in electoral politics. Vice presidential nominees are used as explicit messages meant to encourage support amongst designated subgroups. It is the campaign's goal to have this message received by the targeted subgroups while going largely unnoticed by those who might otherwise be de mobilized by the selection. Through this exploration, I provide an opportunity to examine this argument and find evidence to support viewing vice presidential nominees as a differentiated messaging tool.

In the following chapter, I explore the existing literature on the potential influence of vice presidential nominees on voters. I then extend this existing body of research by arguing that presidential candidates select running mates in an effort to send an explicit campaign message to a subset of the electorate. Instead of examining vice presidential nominee influence on the entire electorate, as previous studies have done, I examine the targeted use of the vice presidential nominee to mobilize particular subgroups. The cases of Lyndon B. Johnson and Sarah Palin present prime opportunities to explore this strategy.

Chapter Two: The Influence of Vice Presidential Nominees on Voters

In order to understand the potential influence vice presidential nominees have on voters, we must begin by examining their role during the campaign. The use of vice presidential nominees during campaigns has changed dramatically throughout history. From 1804 and until the mid-1900s, political party leaders chose their party's vice presidential nominee. During this time, the vice presidential nominee was believed to be rather unimportant; as a result, parties failed to attract strong candidates for this secondary position (Nelson 1988a, Sigelman & Wahlbeck 1997). A prime example of this was Daniel Webster who was offered the vice presidential slot by the Whig Party in 1848 and responded, "I do not propose to be buried until I am dead" (Nelson 1988b).

Generally the candidates were chosen less for their intellect and talents and more for their potential electoral benefits. The idea of ticket balancing, which still exists today, sprang from this early era. Often selections were attributed to an electoral desire to produce an attractively balanced ticket. For instance during this earliest era, ninety percent of all party tickets featured vice presidential and presidential pairings from different regions (Baumgartner, 2006). Balanced tickets are likely to appeal to a wider array of voters and vice presidents are strategically chosen to boost the presidential ticket's electability (Sigelman & Wahlbeck 1997; Baumgartner 2006; Witcover 1992; Light 1984).

These ticket balancing strategies encouraged the idea that vice presidential running mates influence voter behavior. As a result during the earlier era, vice presidential officeholders were quite often dropped from the ticket before their second term in order for their party to adapt to

the political environment and recruit a running mate that could mobilize the most voters (Baumgartner 2006).

This practice furthered the difficulties associated with finding quality candidates as “the prospect of spending four years presiding over the Senate, only to be replaced at the end of the term, dissuaded most talented political leaders from accepting vice presidential nominations in the first place” (Nelson 1988, p. 859). Earlier vice presidents were often better known for their drunkenness, absent nature, and incompetence than for possessing any shred of power and influence over governmental affairs (Light 1984; Nelson 1988a & 1988b; Baumgartner 2006). Perhaps the most amusing example includes Martin Van Buren’s vice president, Richard Johnson, who left Washington D.C. to go back to Kentucky to run a tavern (Baumgartner 2006). Needless to say as the level of prestige within the office of the vice president grew, the presidential candidates were able to entice stronger running mates.

Until the mid-20th century, vice presidents rarely actively campaigned for their ticket. This should come as no surprise considering the presidential nominee did not begin to actively campaign until the turn of the century. If vice presidential nominees did campaign, it was usually limited to their home state with the exception of Theodore Roosevelt (Baumgartner 2006). Even as recently as the 1980s Goldstein (1982) argued that the vice presidential nominee gained very little media attention. Light (1984) stated that even though at that time the media did not place a lot of attention on the vice presidential candidate, the prospective presidents gave a great deal of attention to their choices. For example President Nixon kept extensive records of his carefully calculated selection process including poll results of how he would fair in the election if he had each of the shortlisted candidates on his ticket. Baumgartner (2006) claims the media is now catching up with presidential campaigns, placing an increasing amount of focus on

the vice presidential selection including who the presidential candidate could have on his shortlist of possible vice presidential picks and when he might strategically announce his choice.

One reason for this growing fascination is that the modern primary season continues to frontload. As states move primary election days earlier in the season, the general election remains unchanged. This typically produces a large gap between the time when the political parties have decided the ticket and the party's convention. In search of something campaign related to cover this lull, media speculation grows concerning who might be chosen as vice president. Presidential candidates also take advantage by wisely choosing when to make their official announcement so as to maximize the attention they receive for their choice and boost enthusiasm going into their party's convention (Lichert & Lichert 2004; Baumgartner 2006).

A large amount of speculative information exists on the electoral effects of vice presidential candidates. Only a handful of researchers have systematically examined how voters' perceptions of vice presidential candidates influence individual-level voting in presidential elections. Unfortunately, there is no consensus about whether vice presidents have the potential to affect voters' decision-making in presidential elections. This is due in part to the very different modeling approaches used in these studies, with some authors examining vice president influence at the level of individual elections (Wattenberg 1984; 1995; Ulbig 2010) and others aggregating the effect of vice president candidates (Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Holbrook 1991; Romero 2005).

When examining the influence of individual vice-presidential candidates on voters, studies generally show that vice presidential candidates have significant effects on presidential vote choice. However, there is disagreement even among election-level studies. For example, Romero examines the 1976 election and finds that, when controls are added to account for the

varied familiarity between vice presidential candidates and presidential candidates, voters' vice presidential candidate evaluations do not have a significant effect on their presidential vote choice (2005).⁵

Studies that aggregate multiple elections into a single study find vice presidential candidates to be influential. Wattenberg (1984; 1995), examining all elections from the second half of the 20th century, finds that voter's evaluation towards the vice president is a significant factor but most often takes a back seat to the evaluation of the president. These aggregated studies produce different results than those dealing with an isolated election.

Conventional Wisdom

In the past, it was widely accepted that individuals vote for the president and do not place a great deal of weight on the vice presidential running mate. Baumgartner (2006) also raises the point that many believe a vice presidential running mate must be chosen carefully, in order to maximize and not damage the party's appeal. This raises the question, does the vice presidential running mate impact the electoral choices of voters? Although the previous studies discussed earlier argue that in the aggregate vice presidential candidates are influential on voters, I argue that their methodological approach conceals genuine individual-level influence. It is

⁵ Romero controls for differences in voters' familiarity with presidential and vice presidential candidates by including a measure that is "related to the voter's evaluations but independent of his or her vote". He does this by using questions from the previous surveys, such as one looking at the approval rate of Ford's pardoning of Nixon, and relates those responses to votes cast for president in the 1976 election (Romero 2005, 458). While he was able to use this model for the 1976 election, not many panel surveys provide this opportunity, limiting the applicability of this strategy.

potentially misleading to treat vice presidential candidates as anything but individual units of analysis. I believe past research combining the influence of vice presidential candidates both across elections and within the same election year could yield deceptive conclusions. Thus the question of whether vice presidents influence voters has not been adequately answered. In an effort to present an alternative methodology, I first establish whether each individual candidate has a significant influence on voters during the given election year. Additionally, I employ post estimation techniques to graphically display the influence individual vice presidential satisfaction rankings have on independent voters for vice presidential candidates that were especially distinctive.

Research Methodology

Aligned with Wattenberg's (1995) study covering elections between 1968 and 1994, I examine modern presidential elections from these same years but do not aggregate and pool the data. I then update the 2008 election and examine the subsequent elections. Again, each election is treated separately, and I measure the influence of an individual's feelings toward vice presidential candidates on the dependent variable, vote choice of the individual. Vote choice is treated as a dichotomous variable, including a vote for the vice presidential nominee's party ticket coded as 0 and a vote for the opposing party coded as 1. Much like in the Wattenberg (1995) study, the key independent variable is one's evaluation of the vice presidential candidates and is measured using a feeling thermometer ranging from 0 to 100. It is also important to control for how the individual rates the presidential candidate independently.

The potential for multicollinearity arises when using presidential and vice presidential candidates within the same party. During the time period studied here, there were vast differences in the correlation values between presidents and their running mates. The lowest

correlations existed between G.H.W. Bush and Reagan in 1980 ($r = 0.28$) and Bentsen and Dukakis in 1988 ($r = 0.27$). Correlations seemed to have the potential to grow stronger in the case of presidents and vice presidents running for a second term. This was the case with Dick Cheney and George W. Bush in 2004 ticket that scored the strong correlational value of 0.70 and Al Gore and Bill Clinton's 1996 ticket where $r = 0.68$. In an effort to avoid multicollinearity issues that arise in some but not all elections, it is imperative to find a more acceptable measure for the presidential evaluations. Wattenberg (1995) suggested measuring this variable in terms of affect towards the presidential candidate. This is constructed through the sum of Democratic presidential 'likes' and Republican presidential candidate 'dislikes' minus the sum of Democratic presidential candidate 'dislikes' and Republican presidential candidate 'likes' when responding to questions such as, "Is there anything in particular about (the presidential candidate) that might make you want to vote against him?" (The American National Election Studies 2010)⁶

In addition to controlling for one's ratings of the presidential candidate, it is necessary to also include controls for party identification ranging from strong Democrat to strong Republican and also ideological leanings measured on a scale of 0, most liberal, to 100, most conservative. This ensures that any difference in the vote choice of individuals can be attributed to a person's feelings toward the vice president and not one's enthusiasm, or lack of enthusiasm, towards the top member of the ticket or because of any other variable controlled for in this study.

⁶ This option is not available for the 2008 election. Instead feelings for both presidential candidates must be substituted for the likes and dislikes variable. However, this should not be a concern as the strength of both correlations, between 2008 vice presidential candidate feelings and likes and dislikes presidential ranking ($r = -0.12$) and presidential feelings ($r = 0.52$), range from very weak to moderate.

The American National Election Studies data provides all the needed information to conduct this study. I utilize logistic regression to examine the influence of vice presidents on voter's choice. In order to more effectively describe the relationship between evaluations of vice presidential candidates and voter preferences, post-estimation techniques are applied to the significant relationships found in the model. These techniques allow us to compare the predicted probabilities of voting for the vice presidential nominee's ticket based on one's feelings toward the different vice presidential candidates.

Results

The results presented in Table 1 reveal four instances from 1968 to 2008 where the traditional method of analyzing the influence of vice presidential candidates on voters was misleading. This first example occurred in the 1980 election where the Democratic vice presidential nominee, Sen. Walter Mondale, did not have a significant influence on voters while his Republican counterpart, George H.W. Bush did play a role in voter's decisions. Although it may not be surprising to most that Mondale was insignificant, this does show that when Reagan selected his rival from the primary season, who went so far as to coin Reagan's supply side economics tactics as voodoo economics, the choice benefitted him electorally. The second instance where there is a discrepancy with Wattenberg's (1995) conclusions occurred in the 1988 election. It was here that Dukakis' choice, Lloyd Benson, did not enter into the minds of voters while George H.W. Bush's selection, Dan Quayle was a significant factor. The next inconsistency took place in the heated 2000 battle for the presidency. In this case, George W. Bush's Republican running mate, Dick Cheney, failed to influence voters while interestingly enough, Al Gore's choice to fill the position, Joe Lieberman, did influence voters. This phenomenon occurred most recently when Sarah Palin influenced voters although Joe Biden was

Table 1: Logistic Regressions Predicting Two-Party Presidential Votes by Year and Candidate, 1968-1992

1968 1972 1976 1980 1984 1988 1992

| | Muskie | Agnew | Shriver | Agnew | Mondale | Dole | Mondale | Bush | Ferraro | Bush | Bentson | Quayle | Gore | Quayle |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| VP Ratings | 0.029* (0.007) | 0.032* (0.008) | 0.028* (0.007) | 0.018* (0.006) | 0.032* (0.007) | 0.025* (0.007) | 0.015 (0.008) | 0.02* (0.009) | 0.026* (0.006) | 0.037* (0.007) | 0.012 (0.006) | 0.021* (0.006) | 0.023* (0.007) | 0.026* (0.006) |
| Presidential likes/dislikes | 0.439* (0.043) | -0.461* (0.044) | 0.545* (0.061) | -0.523* (0.059) | 0.556* (0.049) | -0.556* (0.049) | 0.554* (0.058) | -0.562* (0.057) | 0.539* (0.048) | -0.567* (0.048) | 0.622* (0.06) | -0.531* (0.054) | 0.657* (0.061) | -0.634* (0.057) |
| Party Identification | -0.664* (0.077) | 0.710* (0.079) | -0.420* (0.086) | 0.499* (0.086) | -0.575* (0.064) | 0.577* (0.064) | -0.608* (0.082) | 0.629* (0.084) | -0.524* (0.069) | 0.519* (0.068) | -0.654* (0.076) | 0.601* (0.067) | -0.628* (0.078) | 0.595* (0.071) |
| Ideology | -0.009 (0.01) | 0.010 (0.011) | -0.040* (0.012) | 0.043* (0.012) | -0.032* (0.01) | 0.04* (0.009) | -0.06* (0.012) | 0.058* (0.012) | -0.041* (0.012) | 0.037* (0.012) | -0.054* (0.013) | 0.053* (0.012) | -0.059* (0.013) | 0.055* (0.013) |
| Constant | 0.795* (0.726) | -4.522* (0.712) | 1.536* (0.797) | -4.367* (0.664) | 2.1* (0.74) | -5.511* (0.633) | 4.083* (0.821) | -5.939* (0.904) | 1.572* (0.741) | -4.703* (0.715) | 4.453* (0.796) | -5.857* (0.765) | 4.221* (0.861) | -6.231* (0.723) |
| N | 812 | | 677 | | 954 | | 689 | | 1230 | | 1004 | | 1265 | |

Source: American National Election Studies

Note: Coefficients are estimated for each Democrat and Republican VP candidate per election year. VP satisfaction ratings range from 0 to 100.. Presidential likes/dislikes include the sum of Democratic presidential 'likes' and Republican presidential candidate 'dislikes' minus the sum of Democratic presidential candidate 'dislikes' and Republican presidential candidate 'likes'. Party Identification ranges on a 7 pt. scale from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. Ideology ranges from -100 to 100, most liberal to most conservative.

Standard errors are located within parentheses. “*” indicates statistical significance at a 0.05 level or better two-tailed test.

Table 1 Continued: Logistic Regressions Predicting Two-Party Presidential Votes by Year and Candidate, 1996-2008

| | 1996 | | 2000 | | 2004 | | 2008 | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Gore | Kemp | Lieberman | Cheney | Edwards | Cheney | Biden | Palin |
| VP Ratings | 0.030* (0.008) | 0.021* (0.01) | 0.033* (0.009) | 0.006 (0.008) | 0.041* (0.01) | 0.042* (0.008) | 0.006 (0.005) | 0.012* (0.004) |
| Presidential likes/dislikes | 0.611* (0.066) | -0.606* (0.065) | 0.62* (0.071) | -0.582* (0.065) | 0.527* (0.07) | -0.484* (0.069) | 0.048* (0.003) | -0.045* (0.003) |
| Party Identification | -0.515* (0.077) | 0.547* (0.082) | -0.755* (0.087) | 0.791* (0.065) | -0.545* (0.099) | 0.605* (0.097) | -0.220* (0.109) | 0.229* (0.101) |
| Ideology | -0.07* (0.015) | 0.068* (0.016) | -0.058* (0.014) | 0.069* (0.014) | -0.057* (0.017) | 0.042* (0.017) | -0.019* (0.004) | 0.034* (0.007) |
| Constant | 4.339* (0.959) | -7.425* (0.982) | 3.811* (0.944) | -6.795* (0.873) | 2.476* (1.07) | -6.426* (0.971) | 1.83 (0.50) | -2.55* (0.436) |
| N | 883 | | 897 | | 757 | | 1281 | |

Source: American National Election Studies

Note: Coefficients are estimated for each Democrat and Republican VP candidate per election year. VP satisfaction ratings range from 0 to 100. Presidential likes/dislikes include the sum of Democratic presidential 'likes' and Republican presidential candidate 'dislikes' minus the sum of Democratic presidential candidate 'dislikes' and Republican presidential candidate 'likes' except for 2008 presidential candidates. 2008 totals for this variable are determined by Romero's (2001) measure for combined presidential candidate evaluation and use feeling thermometer scores, Republican minus Democrat, ranging from -100 (most-Democratic) to 100 (most-Republican). Party Identification ranges on a 7 pt. scale from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. Ideology ranges from -100 to 100, most liberal to most conservative. Standard errors are located within parentheses. "*" indicates statistical significance at a 0.05 level or better two-tailed test.

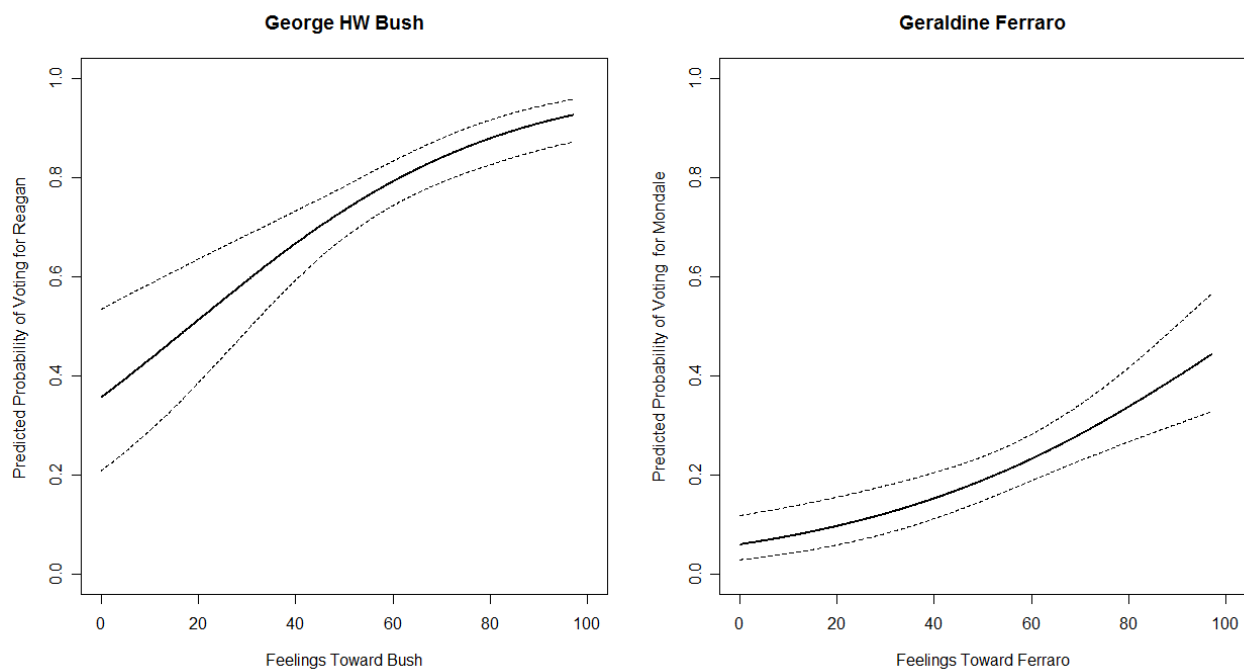
not a contributing factor. According to Wattenberg's methodology these particular elections, along with all of the elections from 1968 through 1992, were significantly influenced by the vice presidential running mates. Our new evidence suggests such sweeping conclusions are misguided.

Another finding worthy of attention is that in all cases when vice presidential candidates were influential, they were a positive addition to their party's ticket. This discovery is worth noting as it directly contradicts the media's news framing and our understanding of certain vice presidential selections. For example in the 1988 election George H.W. Bush asked a political advisor to draw up a list of 20 possible candidates including a handful of candidates added to throw off the media. According to Witcover (1992, p. 335) Bush's selection of the relatively inexperienced "Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana – generally regarded as a lightweight and certainly one of the decoys" making the list was "fantastic – but not in the way George Bush meant". In an effort to set himself apart from Reagan's administration, many felt he made a rash and miscalculated decision that hurt his ticket especially considering Bush had never formally spoken with Quayle prior to his selection. Bush also received great pressure to remove Quayle from the Republican ticket when running for a second term in 1992 (Witcover 1992). Evidence in Table 2 suggests that although it is impossible to know if a different selection would have benefitted Bush's ticket, Quayle did positively influence voters in both elections.

In order to gain a stronger understanding of the influence of vice presidential candidates on voters, post estimation techniques simulate the predicted probability of voting for a party's ticket based on feelings toward that party's vice presidential candidate while holding all other variables constant. In this chapter, I more broadly concentrate on voters indentifying as independents. Ulbig (2010) argues these are the voters most likely to be persuaded media

coverage of the selection.⁷ Within the two party system, independents are typically seen as more likely to be undecided come the general election season. Candidates are often challenged to find ways to persuade these voters to support their ticket. I will examine three more controversial selections, including Geraldine Ferraro in 1984, Dan Quayle’s second selection in 1992, and Sarah Palin in 2008. First I will start by examining the 1984 election in which Walter Mondale chose Geraldine Ferraro to serve as the first woman on a major party ticket.

Figure 1: Influence of VP Candidates on Independent Voters in 1984



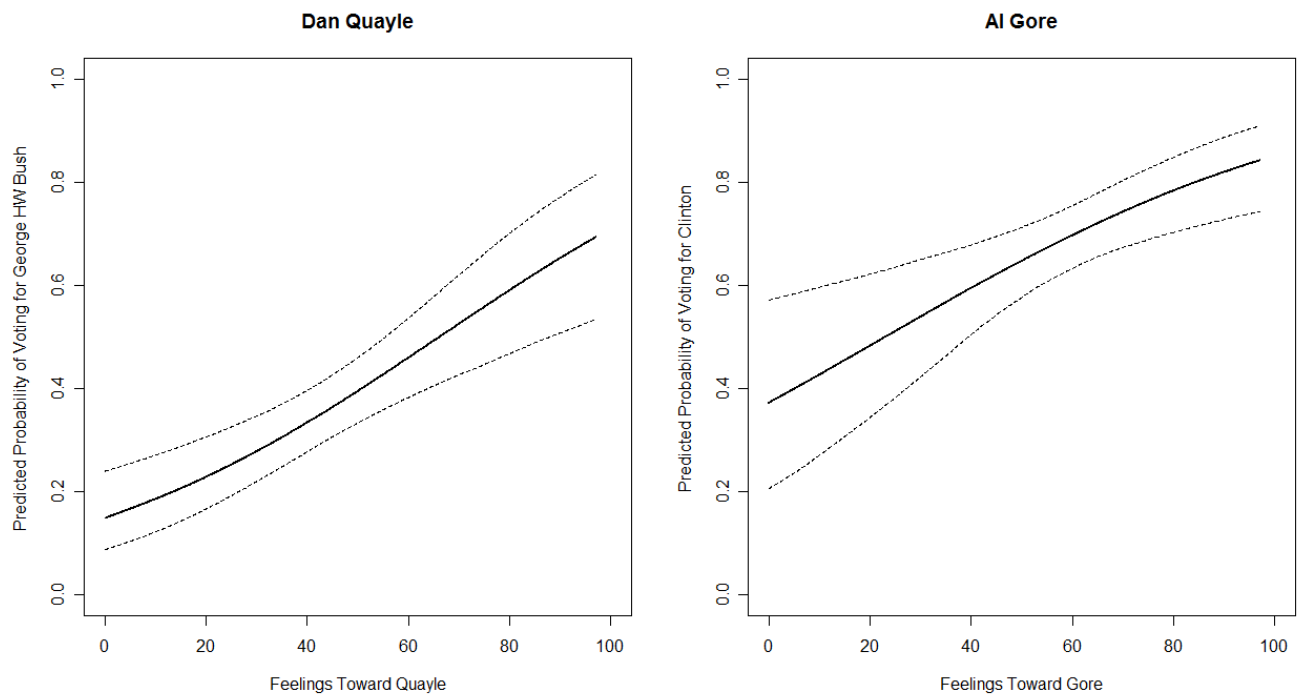
Note: Graphic displays the predicted probabilities of independents voting for each presidential ticket in the 1984 election based on their feelings toward the vice presidential candidates of that party. Predicted probabilities are estimated with all other continuous variables held at their means. Dashed lines indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities estimated using the Zelig software package.

⁷ See Bartels, 2002; Campbell et al., 1960; Hillygus & Shields, 2008; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Zaller, 1992

The results in Figure 1 graphically display the influence of each vice presidential candidate on voting for their respective ticket amongst independents in 1984. Bush's influence changes more dramatically amongst independents who report unfavorable feelings toward him. For example, independents who report not liking Bush at all, ranking him at a zero on the scale of zero to 100, are predicted to vote Republican a mere 36%, plus or minus approximately 8%, of the time. Yet those who ranked him at a more neutral fifty are predicted to vote for his ticket 73%, plus or minus 3% of the time. This is a change in average probability of 37%. Interestingly enough, at Bush's higher ratings on the feeling thermometer scores, between 51 and 100, the predicted probability of voting rate of change only increases by 19%; however, for this range, he both starts high at an average of 73% (+/- 3%) and finishes high at 92% (+/- 2%).

On the other hand, Geraldine Ferraro appears to increase the likelihood one will vote for Mondale at a much slower rate. While those who most strongly disliked Ferraro, rating her a zero, were predicted to vote for Mondale 6% (+/- 2%) of the time, those who were neutral towards her, rating her at a 50, were still highly unlikely to vote for Mondale, at rates of 19% (+/- 2%). Surprisingly, even those who reported liking Ferraro at the highest level were only predicted to vote for Mondale 44% (+/- 6%) of the time. While the logistic regression showed Ferraro positively influenced her ticket, her more modest rate of change only ranging 38 total percentage points is perhaps more of a reflection on the strength of the Reagan ticket in relation to Mondale's. Perhaps there was only so much her unique addition to the Democratic presidential ticket could do in an election where Reagan carried 49 out of the 50 states and won with a convincing 525 Electoral College votes to Mondale's embarrassingly low 13 votes.

Figure 2: Influence of VP Candidates on Independent Voters in 1992



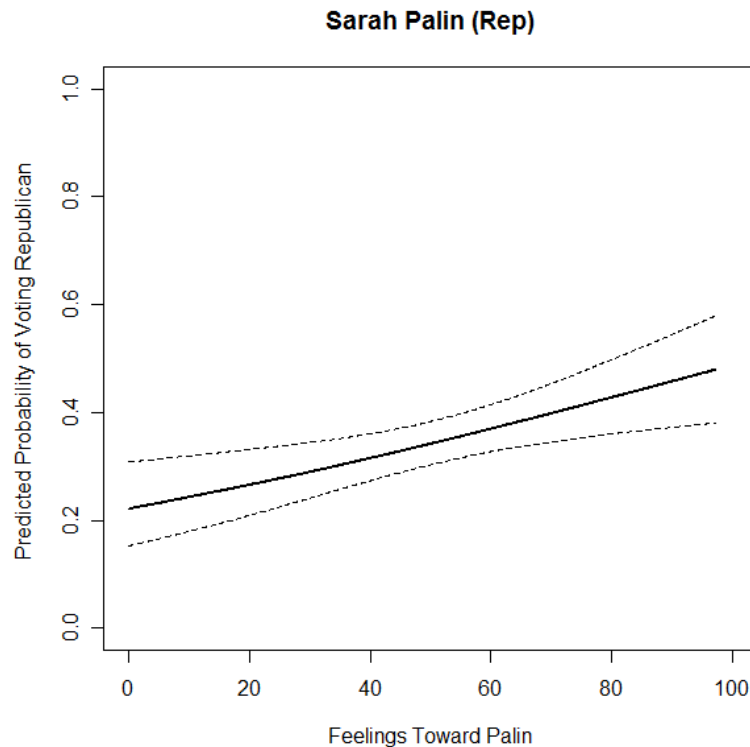
Note: Graphic displays the predicted probabilities of independents voting for each presidential ticket in the 1992 election based on their feelings toward the vice presidential candidates of that party. Predicted probabilities are estimated with all other continuous variables held at their means. Dashed lines indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities estimated using the Zelig software package.

Moving on to the 1992 election, Figure 2 displays the influence of Quayle and Gore on voting for George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. First it is important to note that although the sample over all showed that both vice presidential candidates had a positive influence on the race, more independents indicated they felt favorable towards Gore than did not, and more independents felt unfavorable towards Quayle than favorable. At the height of Quayle's favorability, the highest predicted probability of an independent voting for the Republican ticket is only 69% (+/- 7%) and at his lowest rating the predicted probability is a meager 15% (+/- 4%). Independents who felt impartial to Quayle, rating him a fifty, were only predicted to vote for the Republican ticket

40% (+/-3) of the time. Gore experienced almost the same rate of change over time that Quayle did over independents in the 1992 election. However, Gore's predicted probabilities were considerably higher to start. Those who most strongly disliked Gore still voted for the Democratic ticket 38% (+/- 9%) of the time. While those independents who liked him reached their highest levels, most were predicted to vote for the Democratic ticket as often as 84% (+/- 4%) of the time.

The 2008 election was different than the elections discussed earlier. For starters as was the case in forty percent of the elections studied, only one candidate was influential on voters' decisions. Figure 3 shows the predicted probability for independents of voting for John McCain across the various levels of satisfaction towards Sarah Palin. Although it is evident that as Palin's likability increases so too does the predicted probability an individual will vote Republican, her influence appears less dramatic than say Quayle in 1992 or George H.W. Bush in 1980. On average, independents who responded with the strongest dislike for Palin were only predicted to vote Republican roughly 22 percent (+/- 4%) of the time. On the other hand, those reporting the highest levels of satisfaction towards her only increased their predicted likelihood of voting Republican by approximately 25%. This modest increase is less than half the overall increase George H.W. Bush experienced in 1980. Additionally, the highest estimated predicted probability of independents voting for the Republican ticket rests at Palin's highest feeling thermometer rating, but still fails to exceed 50%.

Figure 3: Influence of Sarah Palin on Independent Voters in 2008



Note: Graphic displays the predicted probabilities of independents voting for the Republican presidential ticket in the 2008 election based on their feelings toward the vice presidential candidates. Predicted probabilities are estimated with all other continuous variables held at their means. Dashed lines indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities estimated using the Zelig software package.

Discussion

These results confirm the initial apprehension towards treating both party's vice presidential candidates as one unit across and within elections. Wattenberg's (1995) methodology, treating elections separately while combining feelings towards both vice presidents, misleadingly assumes that in each election vice presidential candidates are influential on voters. These findings, taking into consideration historical differences between vice presidential candidates from 1968 to 2008, suggest that in 40% of the elections studied, such

conclusions are simply inaccurate. The graphic displays of the influence of select vice presidential nominees on voters further stress the differences amongst candidates.

These results more accurately depict the wide array of candidates vying for the vice presidency. For example, the 2008 election pitted two very different vice presidential candidates against one another. As an experienced Senator, Joe Biden more accurately fit the stereotypical politician description, but was met by a radically different Republican counterpart. Although Sarah Palin was a near unknown before her nomination, this did not remain the case for long. By the election, nearly twice as many respondents (615:376) indicated they either had no opinion towards Joe Biden or they did not know who he was than responded in this way when asked how they felt towards Sarah Palin. Arguably Sarah Palin and her family's media exposure far outshined that of the attention Joe Biden received. Although experienced, it appears that Joe Biden was overshadowed by larger personalities within the election. The electorate as a whole simply did not see him as an influential factor.

Conclusion

While conventional wisdom suggests vice presidents either do not have an impact on voters or potentially hurt a ticket, previously conducted research has mixed results on whether vice presidents influence voters. While some studies call into question their influence, when studying vice presidential nominees' influence across election years, they appear to encourage votes in favor of their party over all election years. However this research suggests previous methods, which combined the influence of both vice presidential candidates and at times election years, inadequately depicts individual-level influence. Instead this research considers the vast differences in vice presidential candidates over the years, not all will be influential if treated individually.

Throughout the past forty years, I find that the 1980, 1988, 2000, 2008 presidential elections were all examples of elections in which one vice presidential candidate was a significant influence on voters while the same was not true for their counterpart. When treated as a combined unit in each of these elections, the vice presidents were both considered influential. I argue these conclusions are misleading. When examining the influence of candidates individually, I discover that even within elections when both candidates are influential, their influence on independents can vary dramatically. Looking back on the 1984 election is a prime example where Bush was predicted to help his ticket at a far higher rate than Ferraro was estimated to influence independents. If these two nominees were treated in the aggregate, these differences would be overlooked.

This chapter merely addresses the first step in moving away from previous research on the influence of vice presidential nominees on voters. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is imperative that studies on this topic take into account how the vice presidential nominees are used by the tickets. Previous studies, and this current chapter, operate under the assumption that vice presidential nominees must be a significant influence on the entire electorate or on undecided moderate voters. When we consider the vice presidential nominee is selected to balance the ticket, this former approach appears to be misaligned with their intended purpose.

In the remainder of this research, I express the importance of viewing vice presidential nominees as an explicit differentiated message. I then reexamine the effect of vice presidential candidates by more effectively accounting for the subsets of the electorate that are the most likely to be influenced by vice presidential candidates. The 1960 and 2008 elections provide an appropriate electoral scenario to examine the effectiveness of explicit targeted appeals through

examining Lyndon Johnson's ability to persuade and mobilize Southern Democrats and Sarah Palin's ability to deliver the conservative base.

Chapter Three: Vice Presidential Running Mates as Voter Mobilization Tools

“The question will not be asked, is he capable? Is he honest? But can he by name, by his connexions, by his wealth, by his local situation, by his influence, or his intrigues, best promote the election of a President?”

-- Samuel White, Senator from Delaware⁸

From a campaign strategies standpoint, presidential candidates must find ways to appeal to enough prospective voters to help them gain the support of a plurality of the electorate. As was discussed previously, this practice may prove difficult following the primary election season. Preceding the general election, party members are given the opportunity to choose between a variety of candidates. Obviously only one candidate can win the nomination and this has the potential to aggravate members of the party that did not have their candidate chosen. Presidential hopefuls must then decide who they will need to persuade and mobilize in order to win.

How candidates should focus their limited resources to best maximize the impact they have on likely voters is a continuous gamble for campaigns. As discussed in Chapter One, many theorists claim it is in the best interests of candidates to center their message and appeal to those more likely to be undecided. In reality the political environment does not always follow the theoretical debates of political scientists. Instead often what is witnessed is pressure on candidates to activate factions within their party base. Although employing particular campaign

⁸ Samuel White’s statement was made on the floor of the Senate during debates held concerning the 12th Amendment. He strongly voiced his opinions on separating the vice presidential and presidential elections. Quote appears in Witcover (1992).

tactics designed to secure the party base runs counter to what many theorists claim is in the typical politician's electoral interests, many candidates feel it is essential to reach out to their party's core supporters.

I contend the selection of a vice presidential running mate is used by campaigns to explicitly appeal to a subset of the electorate. Rosenstone and Hansen provide justification for this strategy and argue "people who identify closely with political contenders are more likely to participate in politics than people whose psychological identifications are weaker" (1993, 19).⁹ Under this reasoning, if the presidential candidate struggles with gaining the support of a subgroup within his party, one way he could potentially secure them is through providing a running mate with whom voters can more closely identify.

Pointed Mobilization

The strategy of using vice presidential nominees as a mobilization tool is by no means a new campaign tactic. The vice presidential position on the ticket has long been used as tool, first by the party and then by presidential candidates to provide a balanced ticket with wider electoral appeal.¹⁰ Historically vice presidential officeholders were often dropped from the ticket before their second term in order for their party to adapt to the political environment and recruit a running mate that could mobilize new factions of voters (Baumgartner 2006). Research indicates

⁹ Also see Campbell et al. 1960; Abramson and Aldrich 1982; and Rosenstone and Hansen 1982.

¹⁰ Following the passage of the 12th Amendment, political parties controlled the vice presidential selection process. This continued until 1940 when President Roosevelt altered the established party-led tradition and insisted on breaking ties with John "Cactus Jack" Nance Garner who had served as vice president in his previous two terms as president.

that several characteristics are used while attempting to achieve a balanced ticket including ideology, region, age, demographic characteristics, religion, and political or military experience (Dudley and Rapaport 1989; Hurwitz 1980; Sigelman and Wahlbeck 1997). The simple existence of ticket balancing strategies encourages the idea that vice presidential running mates influence voter behavior.

This speculation begs the question, do vice presidential running mates impact the electoral choices of voters? All previous studies, both at the single election and aggregate level, examined the potential influence of vice presidential candidates across the entire electorate or amongst independents. I argue that we must approach this body of research in a manner that more accurately portrays the political reality. Studies must view vice presidential candidates as ticket balancers and this perspective should be reflected in research design and analysis.

Vice presidential running mates are not selected to appeal to the electorate as a whole. Instead, they are selected to target a specific subgroup of the electorate that the presidential nominee determines is difficult to gain the support of on his own merit. Presidential nominees select running mates that will broaden the appeal of his candidacy to additional subgroups. It is imperative that studies consider the electoral strategies behind vice presidential nominee selections, when attempting to assess the effectiveness of vice presidential candidates.

Potential Risks and Rewards of the “Veepstakes”

It is said that when vice presidential nominees are announced on the last day of the party conventions, they have the potential to either help or hurt a ticket (Baumgartner 2006). Presidential campaigns select vice presidential candidates with the hope that they will appeal to subgroups otherwise unlikely to support the ticket. In theory, this effort to connect prospective

voters with the ticket should reduce the amount of abstention due to alienation. Providing these voters with a secondary candidate that balances the ticket and that they can relate to should benefit the ticket.

This explicit message might not be entirely beneficial if we recall the spatial model arguments proposed in the introductory chapter. According to these models, striving to seek the support of more moderate members of the electorate, as opposed to subgroups within the party base, should prove more fruitful. The groups within the base are most likely to vote for their party's candidate, and moderates are most likely to be up for the taking (Black 1948, Downs 1957). Therefore focusing on how to gain the support of the median voters may be beneficial.

Alternatively as Holbrook and McClurg argue this may be costly to spend limited amounts of campaign resources on mobilizing moderates. They find that campaigns must expend more resources in order to first convince moderates to vote for them before they even consider mobilizing them (2005). Others dispute that it may be more beneficial to focus resources on the party base. The base is more likely to donate campaign dollars and volunteer time. This lends support for employing strategies that target subgroups within the party base (Goldstein and Ridout 2002, Holbrook and McClurg 2005).

This debate begs the question, does targeting subgroups in the base of the party necessarily lead to a decline in support amongst those not targeted? In other words, are these necessarily mutually exclusive strategies? I argue that this is not the case. Studies show it is possible to send differentiated campaign messages. We know this is possible with implicit messaging (Mendelberg 2001), and Holbrook and McClurg show that this may indeed be the case for explicit campaign messages (2005).

Focusing on specific vice presidential selections allows for the ideal opportunity to answer these questions. Through nuanced methodological approaches, I can estimate the influence of vice presidential candidates on the groups they were selected to target while also investigating their effects on prospective voters outside of the target. It is important to stress that vice presidential nominees are not selected to mobilize everyone within the electorate. Researching their effects on the electorate in this manner leaves a potential disconnect between research and political reality. It may also cause us to misunderstand the true impact of vice presidential nominees on the electorate.

In the remaining chapters, I explore this argument further and examine the influence of two vice presidential candidates, Lyndon Johnson and Sarah Palin. Existing models, including the one displayed in Chapter 2, parsimoniously focus on vote selection and ignore the importance of first and foremost choosing to vote. It may be that these critical potential voters located near the base of the party may not be persuaded by the presidential nominee to vote. They may need a strong explicit message to lead them to the polls. A vice presidential nominee that they can identify with could provide that benefit. Multinomial logit models allow us to examine this phenomenon by including abstention in the vote selection model (Lacy and Burden 1999). I focus on the ability of each ticket to use the vice presidential nominee to mobilize their selected group. I also provide evidence to support the idea that these explicit selections do not necessarily lead to countermobilization.

I begin my examination with the 1960 presidential election. During this time, the Democratic Party was strongly divided on issues of civil rights and social policy. Kennedy used his selection of Johnson as a means of bridging the divide between the factions. I use this example to test the ability of campaigns to mobilize factions, in this case Southern Democrats

while not costing them votes amongst other Democratic voters. Following this example, I examine the 2008 election in which John McCain selected Sarah Palin as his running mate. In this case, McCain struggled to gain the support of a critical subgroup within his party, the conservative base. He stood little chance of gaining their support on his own. He hoped that Palin could drive the conservative base to support the Republican ticket while not costing him moderate support. Both of these cases allow us to better understand a campaign's potential to send differentiated messages. They also enhance our comprehension of the intended impact of vice presidential nominees on electoral factions.

Chapter Four: Lyndon B. Johnson and the Southern Democrats

“We were told that people in Amarillo were so hostile they would have nothing to do with anyone wearing a Kennedy button. It was the local equivalent to wearing a hammer and sickle.”

-Evelyn Lincoln, John F. Kennedy’s Personal Secretary¹¹

The 1960 presidential election pitted the former Republican vice president, Richard Nixon, against the youthful Senator John Kennedy. While several factors attributed to Kennedy’s successful run including, his television performances, campaign focus on swing states, and amongst other factors the economic conditions of the time, it was just over 100,000 votes that separated the two contenders in the general election popular vote. In an election where less than one-tenth of a percentage point separated the two party’s tickets, Kennedy knew all along he needed to exploit every electoral tactic at his disposal. One strategy was the selection of his vice presidential running mate.

When the Senator from Massachusetts won the 1960 Democratic Party presidential nomination, he struggled to gain the support of Democrats residing in Southern states. Near the height of the Civil Rights Era, the Democratic Party experienced challenges in uniting their members who were divided into regional factions over key issues. At the time, Southern

¹¹ Evelyn Lincoln served as Kennedy’s personal secretary during his time in the Senate and Presidency. She took extensive notes and wrote daily journal entries on Kennedy’s daily happenings. She intended for Kennedy to use these to construct his own presidential memoirs.

Democrats played an integral part in the Democratic Party. Kennedy knew he needed them in his corner if he was to win in the general election. However, this would not be an easy feat if he was to persuade them on his own.

Although Lyndon B. Johnson was highly skilled at courting his fellow Southern Democrats during the primary season, he had failed to clinch the Democratic nomination. Kennedy knew that Johnson was well supported amongst Southern Democrats when he asked him to join the ticket as his vice presidential running mate. Kennedy hoped that Johnson's addition would provide him with a balanced ticket and encourage Southern Democrats to turnout and persuade them to vote for the Democratic Party ticket in the general election.

Within the literature, a reason given for abstaining from voting is what is referred to as abstention due to alienation (Converse, 1966; Adams, Dow, and Merrill, 2006; Brody and Page, 1973; Peress, 2010 Weisberg and Grofman, 1981). In this case, voters are more likely to vote if they are presented with a candidate that they connect with and are less likely to vote if they fail to identify a candidate who aligns with them. Through providing Southern Democrats with a vice presidential running mate that was considered a "favorite son" of the Southern party wing, Kennedy wished to avoid alienating the subgroup to the point of abstention.

While Kennedy's selection of a Southern Democrat was meant to increase voter turnout among Democrats in the Southern region, it risked alienating voters who may have otherwise been drawn to Kennedy's ticket. In this chapter, I will examine how voters' regional placement and attitudes towards Lyndon Johnson affected (1) their decision to turn out to vote, and (2) their vote choice. This approach will allow us to assess whether Kennedy's attempt to activate

Southern Democrats with a regionally balanced ticket had a positive or negative effect on his party ticket.

The Selection of Johnson

Leading into the 1960 presidential election, there was no denying the tension between the Democratic Party and its far more conservative Southern members. In this case, preventing abstention was not the only concern for the Democratic Party. They were also under pressure to prevent disenfranchised Southern voters from forming third parties. The turbulent 1948 election was still fresh in the minds of the Democratic Party.

During the 1948 election, the Dixiecrats¹² formed to protest the Democratic Party's continued support of Truman. Truman was seen as a direct threat to Southern preferences. During his first term in office, he successfully pushed for a stronger civil rights platform and integrated the military. In response, the Dixiecrats proposed their own candidates for the presidency and vice presidency, Strom Thurmond and Fielding Wright. Both men served as governors of deeply Southern states and successfully won the support of five Southern and traditionally Democratic states in the general election (Buchanan 2005). Truman was victorious in the end, but the loss of Southern support led to a very tight race between himself and Dewey.

Although the Dixiecrats promptly disbanded following the 1948 election, tensions remained high over issues of states' rights and civil rights. Traditionally white Southern voters were solid Democrats. However, they were becoming increasingly frustrated with the Party's

¹² The term Dixiecrats refers to the Southern faction within the Democratic Party, also known as the States' Rights Democratic Party, which advocated for states' rights and strongly favored policies and practices that upheld segregation.

presidential nominees (Black and Black 1987, Buchanan 2005). During this period of uncertainty, the pressure to maintain civility between these factions remained a challenge for Democratic presidential campaigns. Kennedy was no different in these regards. As a New Englander, Kennedy was at a natural disadvantage at building genuine connections with Southern Democrats. Kennedy also had to ensure that the party remained unified and no outright Southern rebellion occurred.

These ideological divides within the Democratic Party also became increasingly apparent within Congress. It was in the legislative body that a conservative coalition formed between Southern Democrats and the Republican Party on civil rights and social issues (Stewart 2001). During this time, numerous controversial policy issues were under heated debate. As the Senate Majority Leader and a Southern Democrat, Lyndon Johnson held great power over the legislation crafted.

During the creation of the 1957 Civil Rights Act, Johnson was able to use his powers to determine committee assignments. This placed Southern Democrats in key positions to effectively remove any elements that would ignite strong dissatisfaction amongst Southerners. While considering his future political aspirations, Johnson liked to play both sides of the party. He still managed to take a large amount of credit for passing the 1957 Civil Rights Act, albeit a watered-down piece of legislation. He also diverged from the Southern wing of his party by not endorsing the Southern manifesto designed to counter the Brown vs. the Board of Education Supreme Court ruling and supported legislation meant to regulate union abuses. These actions left the possibility open for Johnson to connect with both Southern segregationalist and Southern moderates (Lincoln 1968).

Southern Democrats were disappointed in the party's unwillingness to nominate one of their own. In their view, the delegate's selection of Kennedy at the convention further threatened their way of life (Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1997). For instance in a 1959 poll, results showed that 78% of Southerners preferred racially segregated schools and would not want their own children going to school with a few black children. In contrast, only 10% of northerners shared these same sentiments (Rossell, Armor, and Walberg 2002). The Southern region remained unwilling to support the monumental legislative shifts and court rulings. During this time, many African Americans choose to leave the South in favor of more integrated regions. (Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1997). Regardless of these dramatic regional and ideological differences, Kennedy realized he needed Southern support and needed to find a legitimate way to connect with Southern voters. This was a tall order for him to accomplish alone.

Kennedy had considered numerous people as his potential vice presidential nominee if he was to receive the presidential nomination. Senator Mike Monroney claimed that "[i]f they called a meeting of all the people to whom they've promised the vice presidency, they couldn't find a room in Los Angeles large enough to hold it in" (Witcover 1992, 146). Many of the contenders resided in the Midwest or West and a selection of a strong Southern Democrat could have been seen as risky (Baumgartner 2006; Lincoln 1968).¹³

When deciding on Johnson as his running mate, Kennedy hoped Johnson could deliver the support of the Southern wing of the party. Earlier in the primary season, Johnson was seen as a regional candidate. At the time, this held Johnson back from achieving the Party's nomination.

¹³ Other serious contenders for the 1960 vice presidential nominee included Orville Freeman (Gov.-MN), Hubert Humphrey (Sen.-MN), Henry Jackson (Sen. – WA), Stuart Symington (Sen.-MO) (Baumgartner 2006).

This same quality was seen as a potential asset for the Kennedy ticket. It was said that with Johnson's addition, "Southern support could pretty much be taken for granted, from both the segregationists and the moderate wing" (Lincoln 1968, 101). This selection could have also cost the Democratic ticket votes. Kennedy was aware of these potential costs, for instance frustrating labor unions,¹⁴ but felt it was in his best interests to attempt to legitimately connect with the South (Lincoln 1968).

Throughout the general campaign Kennedy experienced continued challenges while campaigning in the Southern states. As a result, Kennedy spent a mere 20% of his time campaigning in the Southern region. Instead Kennedy relied heavily on Johnson to deliver the region (Lincoln 1968; Baumgartner 2006). Johnson spent half of his time during the campaign season trying to mobilize Southern support (Baumgartner 2006). Not everyone in the South fully embraced Johnson as one of their own. Some interpreted his previous efforts to show that he was against the civil rights movement as a mere political ploy. The editor of a Southern newspaper stated, "[i]f Kennedy advisers imagine the South as any deep affection for Lyndon Johnson they are wholly mistaken. He is widely regarded as a renegade, turncoat, and opportunist who plays footsie with the liberals" (Lincoln 1968, 125). Some saw Johnson as calculating and unauthentic (Dallek 1991).

Johnson's previous efforts to please people on all sides of the issues, paid off amongst other groups. Southern moderates were pleased with his support of the passage of civil rights legislation. Even segregationists, like Mississippi Senator James Eastland voiced their support of Johnson. He praised Johnson saying, "[he] took everything relating to integration out of those

¹⁴ Johnson represented a right-to-work state which aligned in direct opposition to union interests.

civil rights bills. He has always opposed Congress' implementation of the segregation decisions of the Supreme Court" (Lincoln 1968, 125). Kennedy hoped his selection of Johnson would provide the ticket with solid Southern support. As these examples imply, Kennedy may not have been able to assume their automatic support.

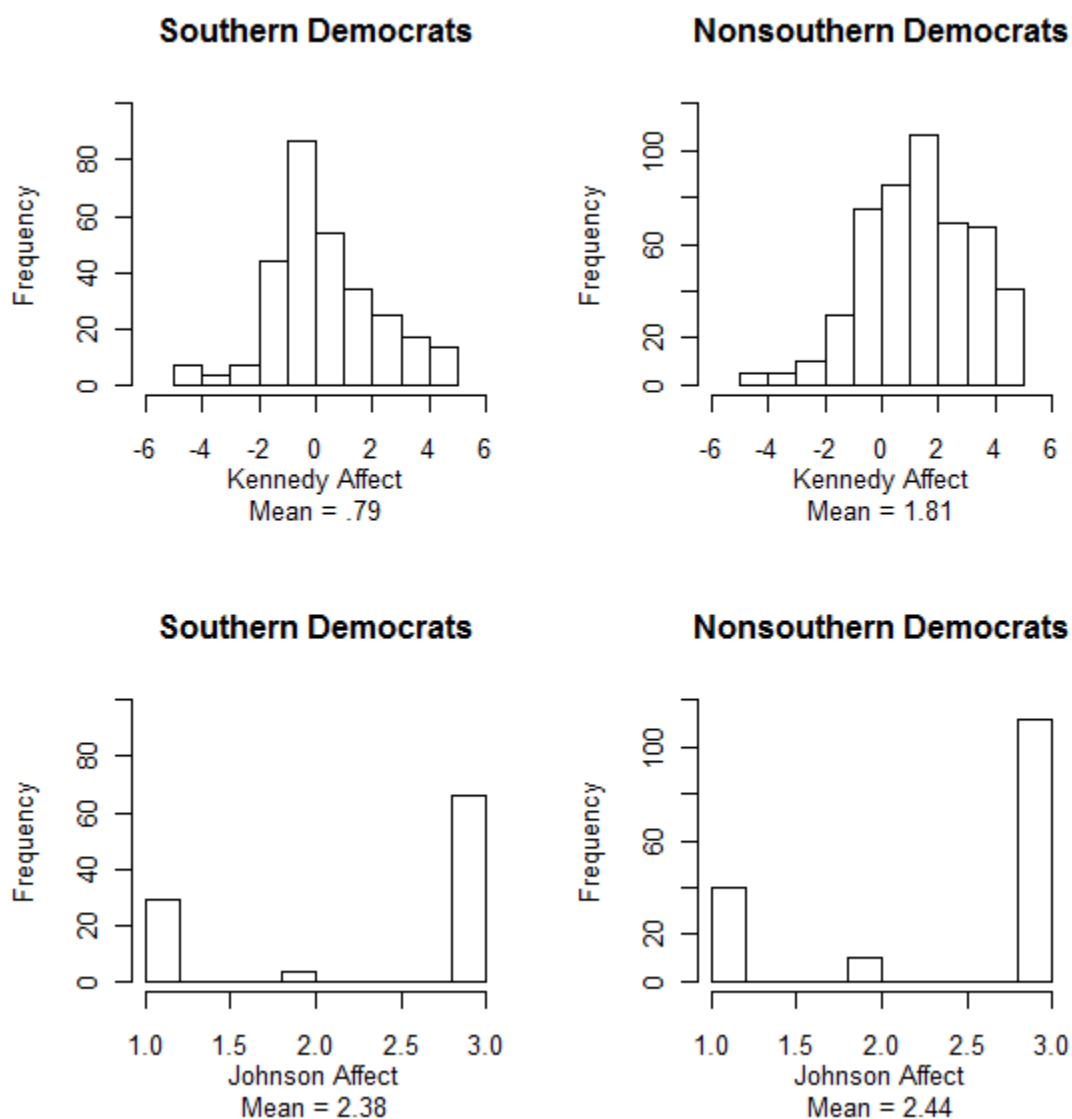
In a preliminary effort to determine whether Kennedy's selection of Johnson ignited the Southern wing of the Democratic Party, I examine candidate favorability data from the 1960 ANES. Figure 1 displays the distribution of voters' affect towards both 1960 Democratic Party ticket nominees. The affect measures vary between the presidential and vice presidential nominee making it difficult to report the feeling score differential between the two Democratic candidates.¹⁵ Through separating the Democratic Party by region, South and non-South, we begin to better understand the patterns of affect towards the Democratic Party ticket nominees.¹⁶

Starting at the top of the tickets, a considerable difference in affect towards Kennedy based on regional differences emerges. While Democrats in both the Southern and non-Southern regions both rate Kennedy favorably on average, non-Southern Democrats rate him a full point

¹⁵ Johnson favorability consists of three options, Anti-Johnson (coded as 1), Mix feelings towards Johnson (coded as 2), and Pro-Johnson sentiment (coded as 3). Kennedy's affect rating ranges from -5 (only unfavorable reports) to +5 (only favorable reports). It is created by taking the difference between the total number of positive attributes a respondent recalled minus the total number of negative attributes. Please see footnote 12 in Chapter Four for question wording.

¹⁶ Analysis is based on 1960 post-election data collected by the American National Election Studies.

Figure 1: Democratic Voters' Affect Towards the Democratic Candidates by Region



Source: American National Election Study 1960 Post-Election Survey.

Note: Johnson favorability consists of three options, Anti-Johnson (coded as 1), Mix feelings towards Johnson (coded as 2), and Pro-Johnson sentiment (coded as 3). Kennedy's affect rating ranges from -5 (only unfavorable reports) to +5 (only favorable reports). It is created by taking the difference between the total number of positive attributes a respondent recalled minus the total number of negative attributes.

higher (1.81) than their Southern counterparts (0.79). This means that when examining respondents' lists of candidate likes and dislikes, non-Southern Democrats on average either listed one additional positive attribute or one less negative attribute than Southern Democrats. This supports the suspicion that Kennedy may struggle to garner the support of the Southern party members. They appeared to be less enthusiastic towards him when compared to non-Southern Democrats. According to my theory, Johnson's addition to the ticket should be expected to add enthusiasm in the South. According to Johnson's measure of affect, a simplified three category measure¹⁷, the regions appeared to rate Johnson nearly identically. Both on average reported mixed to positive ratings towards Johnson. This is not the regional difference in Johnson affect scores one might anticipate. However, affect, especially as it is measured here, only tells the first step of the story.

In the next section, I will move beyond affect distributions and address the influence Johnson's selection had on voting behavior. As was mentioned in previous chapters, we know little about how explicit appeals alter behavior. I will demonstrate Johnson's influence on voter mobilization and on voters' selections.

Modeling the Decision to Vote

I explore Johnson's influence on voter mobilization and presidential vote choice. I use 1960 American National Election Studies (Campbell et. al 1999) post-election data to test the following hypotheses: (1) I expect Lyndon Johnson should have a significant influence on Southern Democratic voters' choice of presidential tickets; (2) I expect Kennedy's explicit

¹⁷ The parsimonious Johnson affect measure does not lend itself as well to analysis because it only consists of three categories. Therefore, variability amongst respondents is hindered. This is exacerbated by the smaller n created when breaking the Democratic Party into regional factions.

selection of a Southern Democrat should positively influence voter turnout among Southern Democrats; and (3) the targeted appeal of Johnson should not alienate moderate voters, such that moderate voters' affect towards Johnson should not significantly affect either their vote choice or turnout. As was mentioned in Chapter One, it should be possible to differentiate explicit campaign messages. The selection of Johnson as a running mate should have provided Kennedy with the differentiated support of Southern Democrats without costing him support amongst the remaining members of the party.

First, I examine the effect of voters' feelings toward Johnson on vote choice. I employ a logit model which focuses on whether respondents voted for Kennedy (1) or Nixon (0) in the 1960 election. The key independent variable is voters' affect towards Lyndon Johnson. I measure this using the ANES Johnson affect score. This includes three possible responses, anti-Johnson sentiments (1), mixed feelings towards Johnson (2), and pro-Johnson sentiments (3). To test the hypothesized difference in effects for Southern Democrats and the remaining Democratic Party voters, I separate the data into Southern Democratic voters, voters indicating residency in a Southern state¹⁸ who also self-identified as a Democrat or Democratic leaning Independent (scores of 1) and Democrats living in any other region of the United States (score of 0). Separate logit models are constructed for each voting group.

I control for voters' feelings towards John Kennedy, by creating an affect score. In the survey, respondents were asked to recall what positive aspects may make them vote for Kennedy

¹⁸ Southern states include both categories of the solidly Southern and border states including Virginia, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia (Campbell et. al. 1999).

and if there were any reasons that they may not wish to vote for Kennedy.¹⁹ The variable is constructed through taking the difference between the sum of the total number of Kennedy ‘likes’ minus the sum of the total number of respondent Kennedy ‘dislikes’. This variable ranges from -5, indicating only negative reasons to vote against Kennedy, through +5, indicating only positive reasons to vote for Kennedy. Additionally, I control for a number of variables including a variable measuring respondents’ level of education, gender, income, race, age, and rural/urban.²⁰

Next, I employ a multinomial logit model to evaluate the effect of Johnson on the combined decision to turnout and vote.²¹ The dependent variable considers the respondent’s entire vote choice, including the choice to abstain. This variable includes a vote for Nixon (1), a

¹⁹ The original question asked, “Now I’d like to ask you about the good and bad points of the two candidates for president. Is there anything in particular that might make you want to vote for him. (what is that?)” Respondents were then asked the same question only they were told to report what might make them want to vote against him. Respondents were given the opportunity to list up to 5 items for each question.

²⁰ I include a control variable measuring respondents’ level of education, with respondents completing some college or more education coded as 1 and all others coded as 0. I included controls for gender (female=1, male =0), income, race (white=0, non-white=1), age, and rural/urban (rural=1, urban=0). Income is divided into 25 categories ranging from the lowest (under \$1000) to the highest (over \$15,000). The categories are listed in the ANES codebook on the question “Household Income” (question #v600755).

²¹ Lacy and Burden (1999) introduce a unified model considering voter choice and abstention in their examination of Perot’s effect on the 1992 presidential election. They argue that failing to account for abstention can bias vote choice models.

vote for Kennedy (2), and a decision to not vote (3).²² This variable allows us to examine whether Southern Democratic voters with high affect were more likely to vote and whether non-Southern Democrats with low levels of affect for Johnson were less likely to vote. The choice to abstain is a highly relevant choice in presidential voting and must be included in a complete examination of presidential voting. In their seminal piece, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes argue, “[t]he act of voting requires the citizen to make not a single choice but two. He must choose between rival parties or candidates. He must also decide whether to vote at all” (1960, 89). The multinomial logit electoral choice model takes this critical point into consideration. Through the inclusion of abstention, in addition to the choice of voting for Nixon or Kennedy, and the use of post estimation techniques, I am able to determine the substantive impact of Johnson’s nomination on voter turnout. I again separate the data into Southern Democrats and the remaining Democratic Party members and estimate separate multinomial logit models for each group. I include in this model all of the same independent variables as the previous model described above.

Analysis and Findings

In the initial vote choice table, the logit model indicates that Johnson was an influential factor on Southern Democrats vote selection. Johnson was also influential in the manner anticipated. As Southern Democrats liked Johnson more, they became more likely to vote for the Kennedy ticket. Consistent with my hypothesis, Democrats residing outside of the South did not view Johnson as an influential factor on their vote choice. The logit model confirms the idea that

²² There is an extensive literature discussing whether multinomial logit or multinomial probit models are more appropriate for examining multiple choices made by voters. For further explanation please see footnote 36 included in Chapter Five.

Table 1: Logistic Regression Estimates of 1960 Reported Presidential Vote Choice (Kennedy =1)

| Variable | Southern Democrat Voters | Non-Southern Democrat Voters |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Coefficient | Coefficient |
| Johnson Feeling Score | 0.601* (0.339) | 0.487 (0.380) |
| Kennedy Feeling Score | 0.525* (0.172) | 0.884* (0.245) |
| Education | 0.071 (0.709) | 1.584 (1.185) |
| Female | -0.161 (0.624) | -0.817 (0.786) |
| Race | 0.796 (1.082) | -0.360 (0.694) |
| Income | -0.008 (0.015) | -0.015 (0.023) |
| Age | -0.001 (0.023) | -0.043 (0.035) |
| Rural | 1.007 (0.676) | -0.438 (0.777) |
| Constant | -1.283 (1.783) | 3.561 (2.731) |
| N | 291 | 494 |
| Log-Likelihood | | |

Source: American National Election Study 1960 Post-Election Survey.

Note: Standard errors are located in parentheses. Respondents' level of education, with respondents completing some college or more education coded as 1 and all others coded as 0. I included controls for gender (female=1, male =0), income, race (white=0, non-white=1), age, and rural/urban (rural=1, urban=0). Income is divided into 25 categories ranging from the lowest (under \$1000) to the highest (over \$15,000). The categories are listed in the ANES codebook on the question "Household Income" (question #v600755).

designated subgroups within the same party may be influenced differently by vice presidential nominees. Models examining vice presidential influence across the electorate, do not capture these differences. Now that I have established Johnson's significance, it is now imperative that I move on to discuss the effects of feelings towards Kennedy and Johnson on the probability of voting for Kennedy.

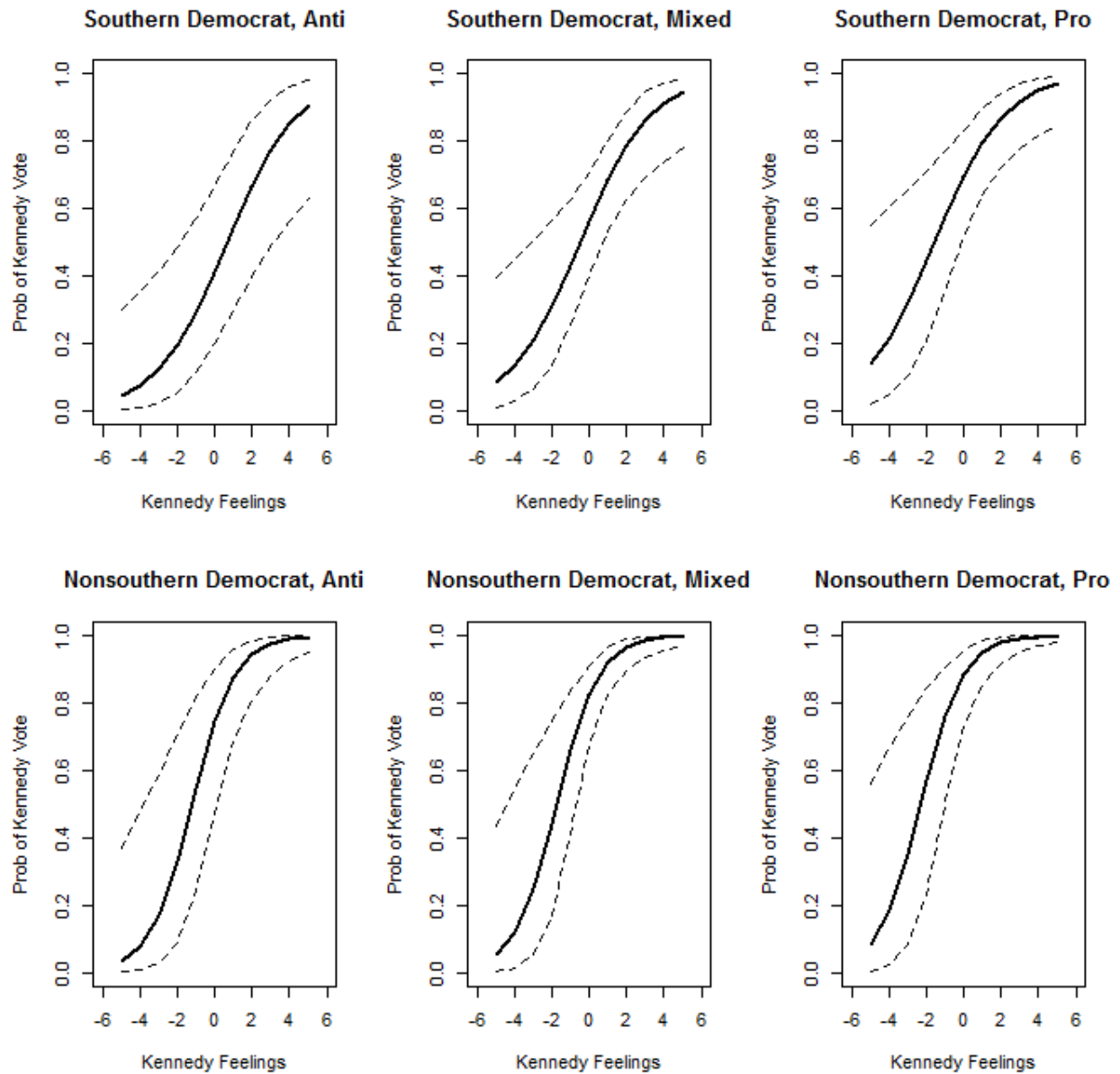
Figure 2 displays the conditional relationship between Democratic affect for Johnson and affect for Kennedy broken down by regional category.²³ As expected, Southern Democrats with similar levels of affect towards Johnson, were more likely to vote for Kennedy if they possessed positive feelings towards Johnson. A Southern Democrat with a Kennedy feeling score of 0 and negative feelings towards Johnson, is predicted to vote for Kennedy 42% of the time.²⁴ When a voter with the same level of affect for Kennedy (0) reported positive feelings towards Johnson, the probability of voting for Kennedy increased to 69%. As anticipated Johnson had a positive effect on Southern Democratic voters.

This effect also appears when we examine non-Southern Democrats. For example a non-Southern Democrat with a Kennedy affect rating of 0 and positive level of Johnson affect had a 87% probability of voting for Kennedy. If the same voter responded with negative affect for

²³ Affect towards Johnson is measured as Anti-Johnson sentiments (1), mix feelings towards Johnson (2), and Pro-Johnson sentiments (3).

²⁴ All predicted probabilities reported in this paper are estimated using the Zelig software (Imai et al. 2008). Unless otherwise noted all categorical variables are set to their mode and all continuous variables are set to their mean when calculating predicted probabilities. 95% confidence intervals are included in Figures 2 and 3, but are not reported in the text of the paper.

Figure 2: Effects of Region and Candidate Affect



Source: American National Election Study 1960 Post-Election Survey.

Note: Predicted probabilities reported are estimated using the Zelig software (Imai et al. 2008). Unless otherwise noted all categorical variables are set to their mode and all continuous variables are set to their mean.

Johnson, that voter's probability of voting for the Democratic ticket fell to 72%. Amongst voters who strongly disliked Kennedy, voters who recalled five negative attributes about Kennedy and no positive attributes, a small difference between Southern and non-Southern Democrats emerged. Southern Democrats who strongly disliked Kennedy, but had favorable feelings towards Johnson, were roughly 4 percentage points more likely to vote for the Kennedy ticket than non-Southern Democrats with similar levels of affect towards the two candidates. Both regional groups were highly unlikely to vote for Kennedy if they felt strongly against him. However, Johnson was able to give Kennedy a small boost amongst these groups. Southern Democrats lead with a slightly higher increase in support.²⁵ This means that Johnson was able to enhance the probability of voting for Kennedy amongst Southern Democratic voters that strongly disliked the presidential nominee. The enhancement was less pronounced for non-Southern Democrats.

These results show that Kennedy's explicit appeal to Southern Democrats was successful at drawing support from Southern Democrats who did not find him appealing. Non-Southern Democrats generally held fewer reservations towards voting for Kennedy. Even when respondents' number of listed attributes balanced out to neutral feelings towards Kennedy, non-Southern Democrats who disliked Johnson were roughly 31% more likely to vote for Kennedy than Southern Democrats who disliked Johnson. Those non-Southern Democrats who liked

²⁵ Southern Democrats who strongly disliked Kennedy but felt positively towards Johnson were predicted to vote for him roughly 18% of the time while non-Southern Democrats with these same affect levels voted for Kennedy approximately 14% of the time. Please note that I have included in the text the differences between the group means. Due to the small-n nature of these group classifications, 95% confidence bounds do overlap between the regional categories.

Table 2: Multinomial Logit Estimates of 1960 Reported Presidential Vote Choice and Abstention

| | Southern Democrat | | Non-Southern Democrat | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| | Kennedy | Nixon | Kennedy | Nixon |
| Variable | Coefficient | Coefficient | Coefficient | Coefficient |
| Johnson | -0.090 (0.272) | -0.739 (0.294) | -0.403 (0.552) | -0.867 (0.643) |
| Kennedy | 0.202* (0.112) | -0.587 (0.138) | 0.456* (0.231) | -0.616 (0.324) |
| Education | 0.358 (0.572) | 0.616 (0.649) | -0.178 (1.173) | -1.919 (1.641) |
| Female | -0.365 (0.450) | 0.049 (0.530) | 2.459* (1.384) | 3.464* (1.572) |
| Race | -1.372 (0.572) | -0.358 (0.319) | -3.652 (1.036) | -0.733 (0.464) |
| Income | 0.018 (0.011) | 0.029* (0.013) | 0.068* (0.033) | 0.103* (0.038) |
| Age | 0.042* (0.017) | 0.066* (0.020) | 0.084* (0.040) | 0.142* (0.053) |
| Rural | -1.006 (0.519) | -0.923 (0.589) | -0.379 (1.133) | 0.183 (1.312) |
| Constant | -0.092 (1.295) | -1.110 (1.494) | -3.784 (3.449) | -9.392 (4.209) |
| N | 129 | 59 | 372 | 41 |
| Log-likelihood | -68.09 | -68.09 | -48.95 | -48.95 |

Source: American National Election Study 1960 Post-Election Survey.

Johnson were nearly 18% more likely to vote for Kennedy than their Southern counterparts, although both regional categories were highly likely to vote for the Democratic ticket.

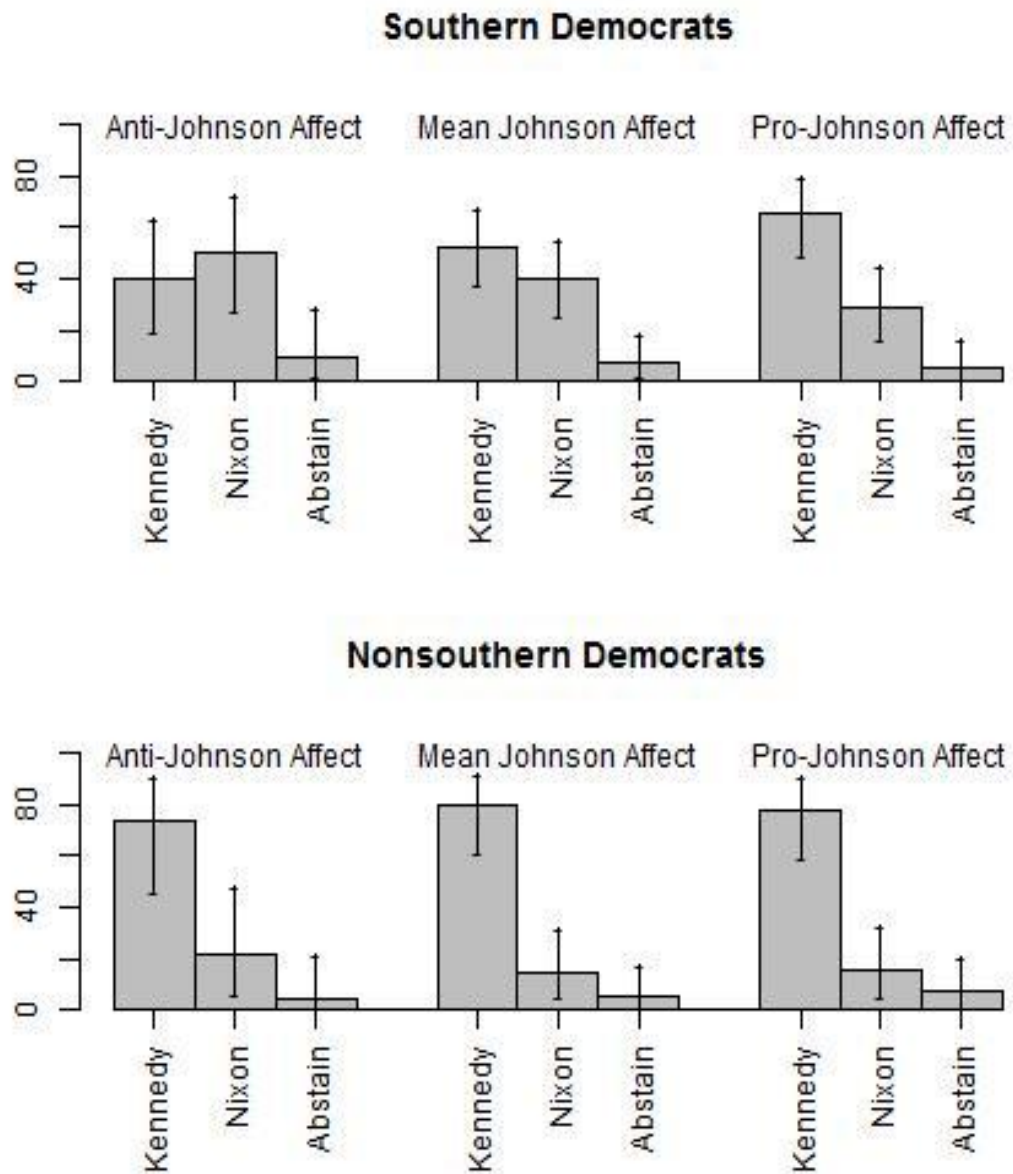
This traditional vote choice model does not provide us with the full story as it only addresses the voting options between Nixon and Kennedy. This logit model is typically used within studies concerning the influence of vice presidential candidates. I argue it may lead us to accept results that do not accurately depict how these nominees are used within the campaign. First and foremost, voters must decide to vote and then we can count their selection. The subsequent multinomial logit model examines the question of mobilization.

The results of the multinomial logit model that considers both the decision to vote and vote choice are reported in Table 2. The traditional logit model displayed a statistically significant relationship between affect towards Johnson and the dichotomous vote choice.

As you recall, this model allows us to examine the mobilization effects of the Johnson's selection. Regardless of region or feelings towards Johnson, Democrats were extremely motivated to vote in the 1960 general election. This should not be a surprise as modern voter turnout was at its peak in 1960. When the two regional groupings are broken down by levels of affect towards Johnson, no subgroup was lower than a 90% turnout rate. The presence of Democratic voters was extremely strong. The highest levels of abstention were amongst Southern Democrats who did not like Johnson, nearly 9.75%, compared to the 5.58% who were Southern Democrats and liked Johnson.

These results are based on a small number of survey respondents. Although the post estimation techniques indicate that there may be support for my hypotheses, the error bounds are simply too broad to be able to fully articulate these differences. Figure 3 suggests that the anticipated effects may be present and Johnson was able to convince more Southern Democrats

Figure 3: Effect of Johnson on Reported Vote Choice/Abstention



Source: American National Election Study 2008 Post-Election Survey.

Note: Predicted probabilities estimated for voters with ambivalent affect towards Kennedy (reported affect = 0). All other continuous variables set at their mean and categorical variables set at their mode. Hash marks indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities reported are estimated using the Zelig software (Imai et al. 2008).

to vote for Kennedy. However under these circumstances, I am unable to fully confirm these findings.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Voter turnout in the 1960 election has been unmatched since and it proved to be an unbelievably close election. In an election where just over 100,000 voters separated Kennedy from Nixon, it was critical that each candidate convinced likely voters to support them in the voting booth. Kennedy knew motivating the Southern wing of his party to vote for a relatively inexperienced New Englander would be challenging. He knew he would have to find a way to connect with them

In this chapter I provide a case study to better understand the effectiveness of sending differentiated campaign messages to the electorate. More specifically, I identify Kennedy's selection of Lyndon Johnson as an explicit message to Southern Democrats. Kennedy assumed that by placing Johnson on the ticket as his running mate, he could assume the support of Southern Democrats (Lincoln 1968). My modeling allows us to test if Kennedy's tactic was an effective campaign tool.

The parsimonious logistic model produced support for my hypotheses. In this model, Southern voters who liked Johnson were more likely to vote for Kennedy. This provides support for the idea that Kennedy may have successfully used Johnson as an explicit message to the Southern Democrats. As anticipated, Johnson's influence was insignificant amongst non-Southern Democrats. This also supports the idea that campaigns can differentiate their messages to reach certain subgroups while going largely unnoticed by groups outside of the target.

The more nuanced multinomial logit model should have also provided similar results while adding the ability to examine Johnson's influence on voter turnout. Unfortunately once the party variable was split by region, South and non-South, the smaller number of cases made it more difficult to draw accurate conclusions about Johnson's influence on the groups. To gain the ability to create more accurate conclusions, one would have to over sample members of the Democratic Party in each region. As this is of course impossible, we must instead view the results from the post estimation techniques with caution.

Even with these limitations, this research pushes us to acknowledge that it may be possible for vice presidential nominees to be used by the ticket for strategic gain. I demonstrate that our existing method of viewing the vice presidential nominee as influential may be missing a critical component. Through focusing on the influence of vice presidential candidates across the electorate, we lose sight of how they are utilized by presidential tickets and how their presence is received by voters. It was commonly assumed that Johnson brought Kennedy much needed Southern support. A proper research approach must acknowledge this pointed strategy. These results demonstrate that this may have been the case.

Johnson's influence on Southern Democrats further demonstrates the importance of more accurately examining the effectiveness of using vice presidential nominees as a way to reach subgroups. The subsequent chapter allows for the opportunity to further this exploration. I will examine McCain's decision to select Sarah Palin as his vice presidential nominee.

Chapter Five: Sarah Palin and the Conservative Base²⁶

It's a risk. No matter how great the candidate, it's a significant risk to put someone on the ticket. They obviously felt it was worth the risk to rev up the base....

-Dan Schnur, former McCain aide commenting on the selection of Sarah Palin as vice president²⁷

John McCain emerged as the 2008 Republican presidential nominee three months earlier than the Democratic Party selected Barack Obama. This timing should have given McCain a clear strategic advantage, granting him time to mobilize Republican party members for the general election while Democrats were still fighting over who would be that party's nominee. But as McCain prepared for the general election, his success in appealing to more moderate voters in the primaries soon proved to be a liability, as he found himself struggling to secure the support of his party's more conservative base. McCain's history of moderate political moves, such as sponsoring campaign-finance reform and joining the "Gang of 14", had alienated many of the most conservative voters in the Republican Party.

Despite these troubles, McCain appeared to be closing in on Obama's lead entering the 2008 party conventions. According to a Pew Research Center (2008) poll, Obama's eight-point lead from June 2008 had shrunk to a mere three-point lead by mid-August. However, this poll

²⁶ This Chapter is adapted from a co-authored work with Michael Lynch titled "The Risks and Rewards of Revving Up the Base: The Case of Sarah Palin". The article is currently under review.

²⁷ Quote appears in Bumiller (2008).

also showed that McCain's supporters lacked enthusiasm. Only 17% of those indicating they were likely to vote for McCain also responded that they strongly supported him.²⁸ McCain needed to find a way to win the votes of more conservative voters, and he faced mounting pressure to use his selection of a running mate as a means to accomplish this goal.

The pressure McCain experienced to reach out to the party base runs counter to the conventional wisdom on effective campaigning strategies. Political scientists have long recognized the importance of the courting the median voter in U.S. elections (Downs 1957; Black 1958). The median voter theorem posits that the candidate that can win the support of the median voter should be able to win the election. However, appealing to the median voter is not without its risks. More extreme voters may decide to not vote at all if a candidate's attempt to win the median moves them too far away from the base of their party. Election models that allow for abstention due to alienation or indifference show that candidates seeking the support of the middle are likely to reduce turnout among more extreme voters (Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Peress 2011).

McCain found himself trying to balance the rewards of appealing to moderates with the risks of alienating the conservative base during the election of 2008. If he worked to appeal to the median of the American electorate he might gain the support of moderate voters, but risked diminishing turnout among conservative Republicans. If he instead worked to solidify his conservative credentials, he could secure the support of these conservatives but at the risk of losing support among independents. The McCain campaign recognized these countervailing pressures on vice presidential selection when they outlined the need for a vice presidential

²⁸ Amongst Obama's likely voters, 27% indicated they strongly supported him as a candidate.

candidate to both “restore McCain’s “maverick” credentials” and to “excite the base of the Republican party” (quoted in Brox and Cassels 2009).

While courting moderate voters or securing the base of a party are often seen as mutually exclusive strategies, additional political science literature implies that both strategies could be pursued simultaneously. Political scientists have argued that candidates are able to appeal to different groups through the use of different messages, if those messages reinforce voters’ predispositions (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Finkel 1993). I argue that politicians, like McCain, may be able to successfully use explicit differentiated messages that appeal to one group of the electorate but are largely ignored by another part of the electorate. McCain’s selection of Sarah Palin as his vice presidential running mate was clearly meant to appeal to the conservative base of the Republican Party. If her selection increased support among conservative Republicans, but had little effect on moderates’ perception of McCain, then McCain may have found a path that allowed for the successful pursuit of support from both moderates and his party’s base.

To test the ability of politicians to successfully activate one group of voters, without arousing the ire of another group of voters, I examine McCain’s selection of Sarah Palin as his 2008 running mate. Using 2008 ANES data, I assess how voters’ perceptions of Palin influenced their decision to turnout and vote for McCain. Specifically, I analyze the level of affect towards Sarah Palin for conservatives and moderates. Then I examine the influence these levels of affect for Palin had on voters’ decision to turnout and their decision to support McCain. I find that conservatives’ perceptions of Palin had a strong effect on turnout and vote choice, while Palin seemed to have little influence on moderates’ decisions to turnout and on vote choice.

The Selection of Palin

When considering spatial theories of voting, McCain's moderate reputation should have been electorally beneficial for him. Shifts within the electoral climate overtime suggest that this may not reflect political reality. Abramowitz (2011) demonstrates that since the 1980s the conservative wing of the Republican Party has become more conservative. In the past three decades, Republican identifiers' self-reported average conservatism scores have increased from an average score of 5 up to 5.6 on a 7-point scale. The activist base of the Republican Party has also grown, from 11 percent of the party in the 1980s to 19 percent in the current period.²⁹ This evidence implies that the growing Republican base should be difficult to secure for a candidate with a moderate reputation. These findings also suggest that if the current trends persist, the pressure to appeal to ideological extremes will continue to be an objective for the parties, especially Republicans.

McCain was aware of the pressure to mobilize the party base and this was apparent in his campaign's actions. Jessee (2010) compared 2008 voters' ideological distribution to that of the presidential candidates' campaign stances and showed that McCain was pulled towards a more conservative message when compared to the placement of a majority of voters. McCain's well-known moderate political activities hindered him from activating and reinforcing the party base solely on his own, and his campaign realized they needed to find others ways, such as the vice presidential selection, to appeal to the party's base. Steve Schmidt, a senior strategist for the

²⁹ Abramowitz (2011) defines the activist base as Republican identifiers that reported participating in three or more of the following activities as recorded by the American National Elections Survey: voting; trying to influence someone else's vote; displaying campaign material. Donating to a candidate or party; attending a rally; and working for a campaign.

2008 McCain campaign, argued that the most important goal for a running mate was that, “the nominee had to excite the base of the Republican Party” (quoted in Brox and Cassels 2009, 52).³⁰

McCain announced his selection of Sarah Palin as his running mate on August 29, 2008. Upon her surprise selection, Palin seemed to add new life to the ticket. Palin soon joined John McCain on the campaign trail and her attendance at campaign rallies drew far larger crowds than before. She generally brought new interest to the once stagnant Republican ticket. The 2008 vice presidential debate was the most watched vice presidential debate in our nation’s history with 70 million viewers. Although Goldstein (1982) and Light (1984) argued that traditional vice presidential candidates were not thought to garner media attention, Palin quickly showed that the right candidate selection could effortlessly take over the spotlight and capture the interest of the American public.

At first glance, her addition appeared to provide the McCain campaign the much needed connection to the conservative base. After the honeymoon period dissipated, Palin experienced ups and downs with her media exposure and relationship with the McCain camp (Zernike and Davey, 2008). Following a string of poorly regarded interviews, the disclosure of the abuse of power charges pending against her in Alaska, and numerous other more personal attacks, many wondered if Palin may have produced more of a liability for the McCain campaign than an asset.

McCain’s selection was viewed quite differently by Democrats and Republicans. In a CBS News and New York Times poll conducted on September 12-16, 2008, 75% of respondents

³⁰ Steve Schmidt mentioned four factors key to the selection of a vice president candidate. There were (1) “The nominee had to restore McCain’s “maverick” credentials, (2) the nominee had to help the campaign attract women voters, (3) the nominee had to increase the distance of the campaign from unpopular President Bush, (4) Finally, and perhaps most important, the nominee had to excite the base of the Republican Party.” (See Brox and Cassels 2009, 352).

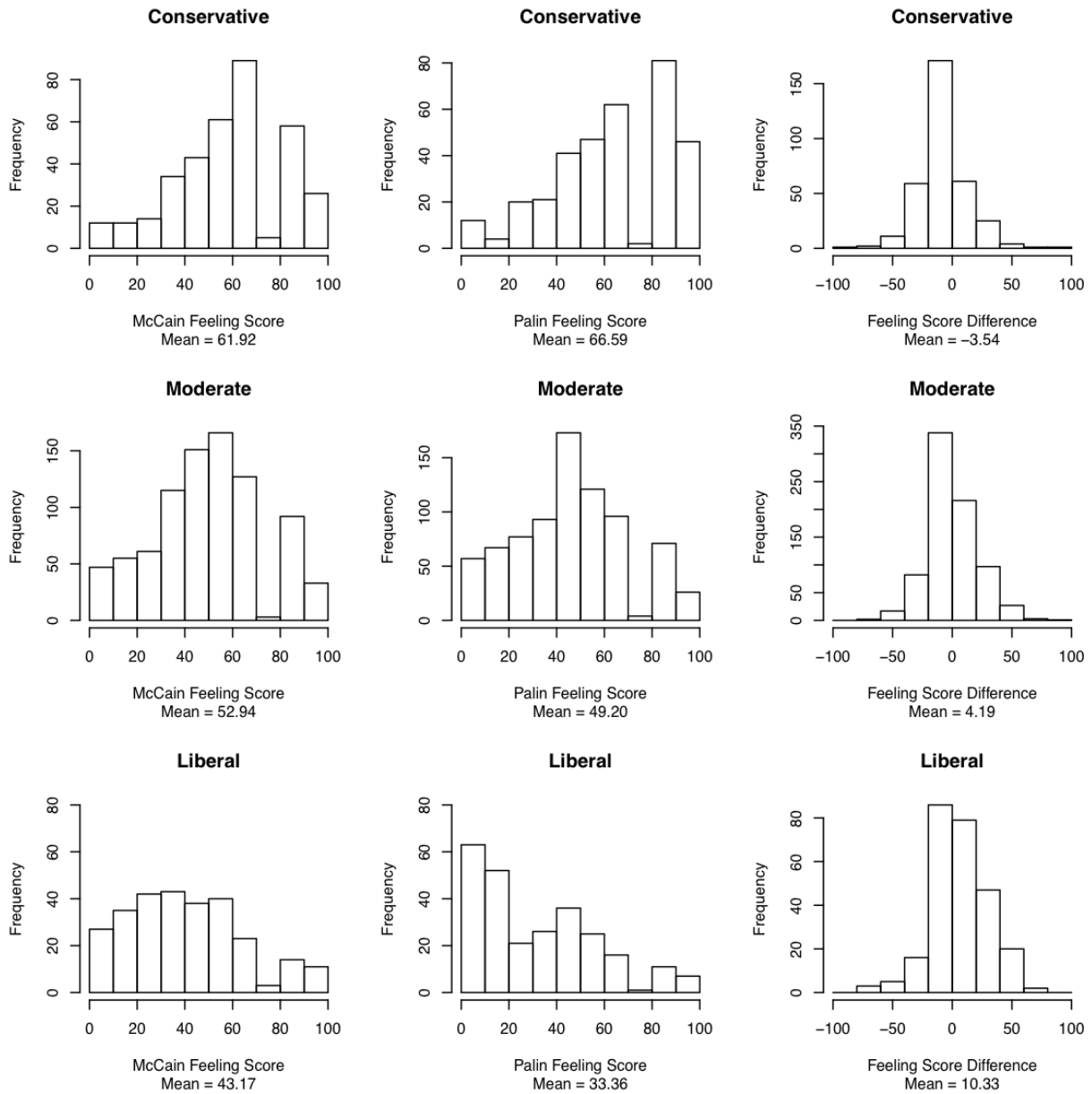
indicated they felt McCain choose Palin to “help him win the election” instead of attributing the selection to her qualifications. This is compared to only 31% of respondents indicating Obama chose Biden as his running mate for electoral gain. While 33% of Republicans indicated she was chosen because she was “well-qualified for the job”, only 7% of Democrats and 13% of independents felt she was well qualified. These poll results indicate that the selection of Sarah Palin as a running mate resonated differently for Republican partisans than for independents and Democrats. I examine whether these initial partisan differences about Palin, led to conservatives being more likely have their assessment of Palin influence their participation and vote choice in the presidential election. It is imperative to examine how the targeted population, specifically conservative voters, viewed this selection.

As an initial step to determine whether the McCain campaign’s attempt to use Palin as a direct appeal to conservatives was effective, I examine candidate affect data from the 2008 ANES. Figure 1 displays the distribution of 2008 voters’ affect towards both McCain and Palin and report the feeling score differential between the two Republican candidates separated by ideology.³¹ The findings suggest conservatives view Palin more positively than McCain with her scores approximately 3.5 points higher than the presidential candidate. However, moderates, those more likely to be considered undecided swing voters, scored McCain higher than Palin by just over 4 percentage points, although moderates scored both individuals lower than did conservatives.³² If I consider the campaign reinforcement literature, this distribution could

³¹ Analysis is based on 2008 pre-election data collected by the American National Election Studies.

³² A majority of liberals scored both Republican candidates unfavorably, but nonetheless scored McCain roughly 10 points higher than Palin.

Figure 1. Voters' Affect Towards the Republican Candidates by Ideology



Source: American National Election Study, 2008: Pre-Election Survey.

Note: Ideological categories consist of respondents' self placement on the 7 point ideology scale and are combined to include conservative voters (scores of 6 or 7), moderate voters (scores of 3, 4, or 5), and liberal voters (scores of 1 and 2). This coding is consistent throughout all of our models and figures.

indicate that there is potential for McCain's vice presidential selection to add conservative support to his ticket. Alternatively, this distribution also shows that moderates liked McCain more than Palin. Moderates' negative feelings about Palin could decrease their likelihood of supporting McCain, meaning his vice presidential selection could have harmful effects for the ticket amongst these median positioned voters.

At this point, I have established how each ideological group feels towards both McCain and Palin, and I can now examine if Palin had a significant influence on voters' behavior during the 2008 election. As discussed previously, the literature fails to adequately help us understand the behavioral impact of explicit partisan appeals. In the subsequent section, I take our examination a step further and look at the impact Palin had on voter turnout amongst ideological groups.

Modeling the Decision to Vote

I investigate Palin's influence on both voters' presidential vote choice and on their decision to turnout. I use 2008 American National Election Studies (ANES) post-election data to test the following hypotheses: (1) I expect Sarah Palin should have a significant influence on conservative voters' choice of presidential tickets; (2) I expect McCain's explicit selection of a strong conservative should positively influence voter turnout among conservatives; and (3) the targeted appeal of Palin should not alienate moderate voters, such that moderate voters' affect towards Palin should not significantly affect either their vote choice or turnout.³³ The campaign

³³ Although the theory does not address how affect towards Sarah Palin will affect liberal vote choice, I assess this effect and report the results in tables and figures and discuss these effects in footnotes.

strategy literature indicates that pointed explicit strategies, such as selecting Palin as a running mate, should provide McCain with the differentiated support of conservatives without costing him support amongst moderates who are expected to be largely unaffected by this selection.

First, to examine the effect of voters' affect toward Sarah Palin on vote choice, I employ a logit model looking at whether respondents voted for McCain (1) or Obama (0) in the 2008 election. The key independent variable is voters' affect towards Sarah Palin. I measure this using the ANES Palin feeling thermometer score, which ranges from 0 (indicating no affect towards Palin) to 100 (indicating high affect towards Palin). To consider the anticipated difference in effects for conservative and moderate voters, I separate the data into conservative voters (voters self-reporting scores of 6 or 7 on the 7 point ideology scale used by the ANES), moderate voters (scores of 3, 4, or 5), and liberal voters (scores of 1 and 2). I estimate separate logit models for each of the three groups.

I control for voters' levels of affect towards John McCain, by including a similar feeling thermometer score that ranges from 0 to 100. Additionally, I control for a number of variables considered in previous voting studies. I include a control variable measuring respondents' level of education, with respondents completing some college or more education coded as 1 and all others coded as 0. I included controls for gender, income, race, age, and rural/urban.³⁴

³⁴ I include a control variable measuring respondents' level of education, with respondents completing some college or more education coded as 1 and all others coded as 0. I included controls for gender (female=1, male =0), income, race (white=0, non-white=1), age, and rural/urban (rural=1, urban=0). Income is divided into 25 categories ranging from the lowest (under \$3000) to the highest (over \$150,000). The categories are listed in the ANES codebook on the question "Household Income" (question #v083248x).

Second, to assess the effect of Palin on the joint decision to turnout and vote, I employ a multinomial logit model.³⁵ The dependent variable considers the respondent's total vote choice, including the option to abstain, and including a vote for Obama (1), a vote for McCain (2), and a decision to not vote (3).³⁶ This variable allows us to examine whether conservative voters with high affect were more likely to vote and whether moderates with low levels of affect for Palin were less likely to vote. As was explained in the previous chapter, the multinomial logit electoral choice model takes into consideration the complexity of voting. It first assumes the importance of deciding to vote and then considers the choice made if the citizen who did vote. Through the inclusion of abstention, in addition to the choice of voting for Obama or McCain,

³⁵ Lacy and Burden (1999) introduce a unified model considering voter choice and abstention in their examination of Perot's effect on the 1992 presidential election. They argue that failing to account for abstention can bias vote choice models.

³⁶ There is an extensive literature discussing whether multinomial logit or multinomial probit models are more appropriate for examining multiple choices made by voters. Multinomial logit models make an assumption of independence of irrelevant alternative (IIA) between the choices that may be violated in voting situations (see Cheng and Long (2007) for an extensive discussion of the IIA assumption). Because of this, Alvarez and Nagler (1995) argue for the use of multinomial probit models in voting analysis. Dow and Endersby (2004) argue that, because multinomial probit models suffer from identification issues and because the IIA assumption is "rarely relevant" in voting data, multinomial logit is generally preferable. I chose multinomial logit largely because existing software allows for more extensive post-estimation analysis with this model. As a robustness check, I re-estimate all reported models using multinomial probit and find almost identical substantive findings. Across the three models reported, only one variable changes significance if a multinomial probit model is used in place of multinomial logit. McCain's feeling score is significant for liberal respondents under multinomial logit ($t=1.97$), but insignificant under multinomial probit ($t=1.95$).

and the use of post estimation techniques, I am able to determine the substantive impact of Palin's nomination on voter turnout.

I again separate the data into liberal, moderate and conservative groups and estimate separate multinomial logit models for each group. I include in this model all of the same independent variables as the previous model and include an additional control variable focused on voting in previous elections. I include a variable measuring whether a respondent voted in the previous presidential election in 2004 (1) or whether they choose to abstain from voting in the 2004 election (0).

Analysis and Findings

The results in Table 1 indicate that Palin was indeed a significant influence on conservative voters. As expected when affect towards Palin increased, conservative voters were more likely to vote for McCain. Counter to the expectations, moderates' vote choice was affected by Palin, but to a lesser extent than were conservatives.³⁷ As affect towards McCain increased, voters were more likely to vote for McCain, regardless of voters' ideology. I will now move on to discuss the effects of ideology and feelings towards McCain and Palin on the probability of voting for McCain.

Figure 2 displays the conditional relationship between affect for Palin and affect for McCain broken down by ideological category.³⁸ As expected, conservatives with similar levels of affect towards McCain, were much more likely to vote for McCain if they had above average levels of affect towards Palin. A conservative with a McCain feeling score of 50 and a mean

³⁷ Affect towards Palin had no significant effect on vote choice for liberals.

³⁸ Low and high levels of affect for Palin are defined as one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean affect level for Palin, for each of the three ideological groups.

Table 1. Logistic Regression Estimates of 2008 Reported Presidential Vote Choice (McCain=1)

| | Conservative Voters | Moderate Voters | Liberal Voters |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Variable | Coefficient | Coefficient | Coefficient |
| Palin Feeling Score | 0.083* (0.016) | 0.040* (0.007) | -0.008 (0.018) |
| McCain Feeling Score | 0.078* (0.018) | 0.042* (0.008) | 0.078* (0.032) |
| Education | 0.537 (0.572) | 0.104 (0.281) | -0.748 (1.006) |
| Female | -0.424 (0.499) | -0.303 (0.255) | -0.205 (0.891) |
| Race | -2.700* (0.686) | -2.529* (0.401) | -2.166 (1.415) |
| Income | 0.051 (0.040) | 0.053* (0.024) | 0.047 (0.100) |
| Age | 0.021 (0.015) | -0.001 (0.008) | -0.030 (0.032) |
| Rural | 0.983 (0.638) | 0.241 (0.320) | -0.425 (1.220) |
| Constant | -10.660* (2.00) | -5.591* (0.765) | -5.977* (2.480) |
| N | 249 | 549 | 200 |
| Log-Likelihood | -57.77 | -208.57 | -21.75 |

Source: American National Election Study 2008 Post-Election Survey.

Note: Standard errors are located in parentheses. Respondents' level of education is coded as such with respondents completing some college or more education coded as 1 and all others coded as 0. I included controls for gender (female=1, male =0), income, race (white=0, non-white=1), age, and rural/urban (rural=1, urban=0). Income is divided into 25 categories ranging from the lowest (under \$3000) to the highest (over \$150,000). The categories are listed in the ANES codebook on the question "Household Income" (question #v083248x).

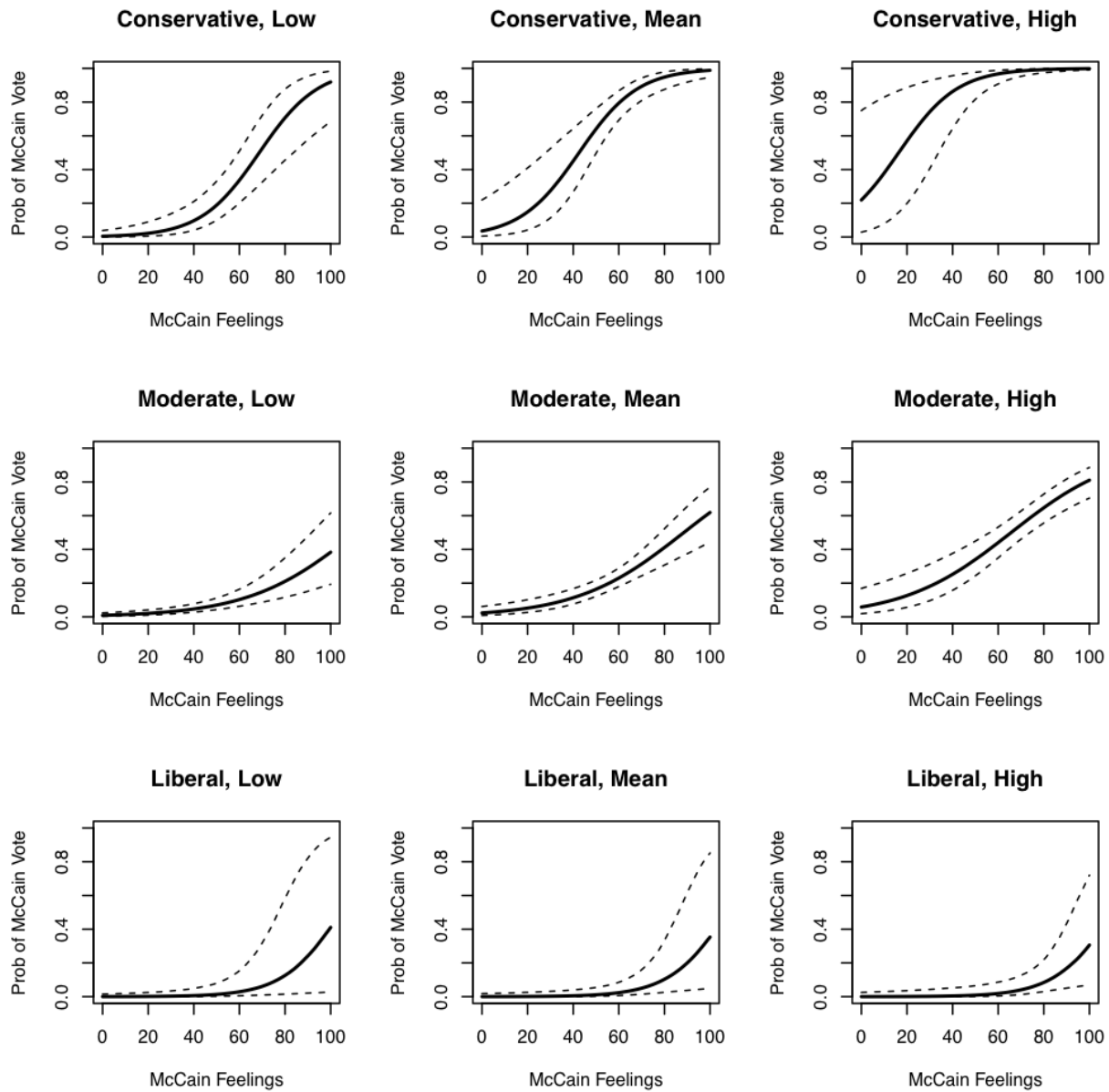
level of affect towards Palin (66.6), is predicted to vote for McCain 63.85% of the time.³⁹ When a voter with the same level of affect for McCain (50) had a one standard deviation increase in affect for Palin (90.96), the probability of voting for McCain increased to 93.02%. Palin had the intended positive effect on conservative voters.

While the trend for moderates was similar, the effect of Palin was more muted. A moderate with a McCain feeling score of 50 and a mean level of Palin affect (49.20) had a 16.39% probability of voting for McCain. If the same voter had one standard deviation lower affect for Palin (24.77), that voter's probability of voting for McCain fell to 6.92%. Moderate voters that had a negative view of Palin were significantly less likely to vote for McCain, but the effect of Palin on moderates was much smaller than it was for conservative voters.⁴⁰ There is evidence that McCain suffered some costs among moderates by appeal to his base, but these costs are strongly outweighed by the increase in support McCain saw among conservatives. Palin positively influenced conservatives in McCain's electoral favor, and, perhaps most interestingly, the predicted probability of voting for McCain amongst conservatives who have high affect towards Palin was extremely high, regardless of the respondents' affect towards McCain. This shows that McCain's explicit appeal to conservatives was tremendously successful at drawing conservatives towards supporting his ticket.

³⁹ All predicted probabilities reported in this paper are estimated using the Zelig software (Imai et al. 2008). Unless otherwise noted all categorical variables are set to their mode and all continuous variables are set to their mean when calculating predicted probabilities. 95% confidence intervals are included in Figures 2 and 3, but are not reported in the text of the paper.

⁴⁰ Liberal voters were not influenced by their affect toward Palin. They were highly unlikely to vote for McCain, regardless of their views on Palin.

Figure 2: Effects of Ideology and Candidate Affect



Source: American National Election Study 2008 Post-Election Survey.

Note: Mean level of Palin affect is held constant at the mean for each respected ideological group. The low and high level categories of Palin affect are held constant at one standard of deviation below and one standard deviate above the mean. Predicted probabilities reported are estimated using the Zelig software (Imai et al. 2008). Unless otherwise noted all categorical variables are set to their mode and all continuous variables are set to their mean.

According to the histograms on respondents' candidate feeling thermometer score presented in Figure 1, conservatives like Palin more than McCain. These last models show conservatives are more likely to vote for McCain if they like Palin, when I hold the opinions of McCain at the mean affect level (61.92). When testing for the possible negative effects of his selection, although significant, moderates only displayed a slight difference in vote choice based on affect towards Palin. This traditional vote choice model stops short of getting at the heart of the issue of whether or not Palin mobilized more voters to take part in the election. The next model presented examines this question.

The results of the multinomial logit model that considers both the decision to vote and vote choice are reported in Table 2. As predicted, increased affect towards Palin decreased the probability that conservative voters would abstain rather than vote for McCain. The same is true for moderate voters, but the effect again has a smaller magnitude than the effect of Palin on conservatives.

Post-estimation techniques allow us to predict the percentage voters that would choose Obama, McCain, or abstain controlling for various levels of affect toward Palin. As conservatives' affect for Palin increased, they become less likely to abstain and more likely to vote for McCain. These results are displayed graphically in Figure 3. A conservative with a low level of affect for Palin is predicted to vote for McCain 18.2% and to abstain 21.4%. Voters with mean affect for Palin are predicted to vote for McCain 48.1% and abstain 16.1%. Those conservative voters with high affect for Palin were much more likely to chose to vote and to select McCain, with 78.8% predicted to chose McCain and only 7.8% likely to stay home on election day.

Table 2. Multinomial Logit Estimates of 2008 Reported Presidential Vote Choice and Abstention

| | Conservative Respondent | | Moderate Respondent | | Liberal Respondent | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Variable | Obama | McCain | Obama | McCain | Obama | McCain |
| Palin Feeling Score | -0.010 (0.012) | 0.0533* (0.013) | -0.010 (0.006) | 0.030* (0.008) | 0.009 (0.011) | 0.001 (0.022) |
| McCain Feeling Score | -0.035* (0.013) | 0.023 (0.015) | -0.010 (0.006) | 0.031* (0.009) | -0.010 (0.0122) | 0.065* (0.033) |
| Education | 0.410 (0.502) | 0.465 (0.492) | 0.712* (0.239) | 0.779* (0.305) | -0.213 (0.528) | -0.963 (1.140) |
| Female | 0.217 (0.448) | -0.272 (0.451) | 0.179 (0.230) | -0.120 (0.288) | 0.614 (0.487) | 0.415 (0.994) |
| Race | 0.445 (0.499) | -1.970* (0.640) | 0.553* (0.242) | -2.023* (0.433) | 0.015 (0.476) | -2.000 (1.417) |
| Income | 0.006 (0.037) | 0.056 (0.037) | -0.003 (0.020) | 0.052* (0.026) | 0.079* (0.037) | 0.150 (0.103) |
| Age | -0.014 (0.015) | -0.003 (0.014) | 0.007 (0.007) | 0.003 (0.009) | -0.003 (0.016) | -0.029 (0.035) |
| Rural | 0.026 (0.563) | 0.633 (0.595) | -0.115 (0.293) | 0.069 (0.348) | -1.468* (0.580) | -2.133 (1.301) |
| Vote in 2004 | 2.340* (0.541) | 3.589* (0.593) | 1.978* (0.251) | 2.222* (0.335) | 2.558* (0.568) | 2.632 (1.399) |
| Constant | 1.576 (1.186) | -6.988* (1.590) | -0.125 (0.518) | -5.712* (0.799) | -0.401 (1.049) | -6.833* (2.625) |
| N | 297 | | 696 | | 227 | |
| Log-Likelihood | -155.15 | | -489.66 | | -87.43 | |

Source: American National Election Study 2008 Post-Election Survey.

Moderate voters show a different pattern of effect in regards to their assessments of Palin. Increases in moderates' affect towards Palin did not significantly change their likelihood of voting. Voters with low affect towards Palin abstained 19.3%, while those with high levels of affects abstain at the similar rate of 21.3%. Palin did have a significant effect on whether moderates voted for Obama or McCain. As affect towards Palin increased, the probability that a moderate supported McCain also increased, although this effect was much smaller than it was for conservatives. Moderates with low affect supported McCain 5.1% of the time, while those with high affect supported McCain a predicted 23.1% of the time.⁴¹

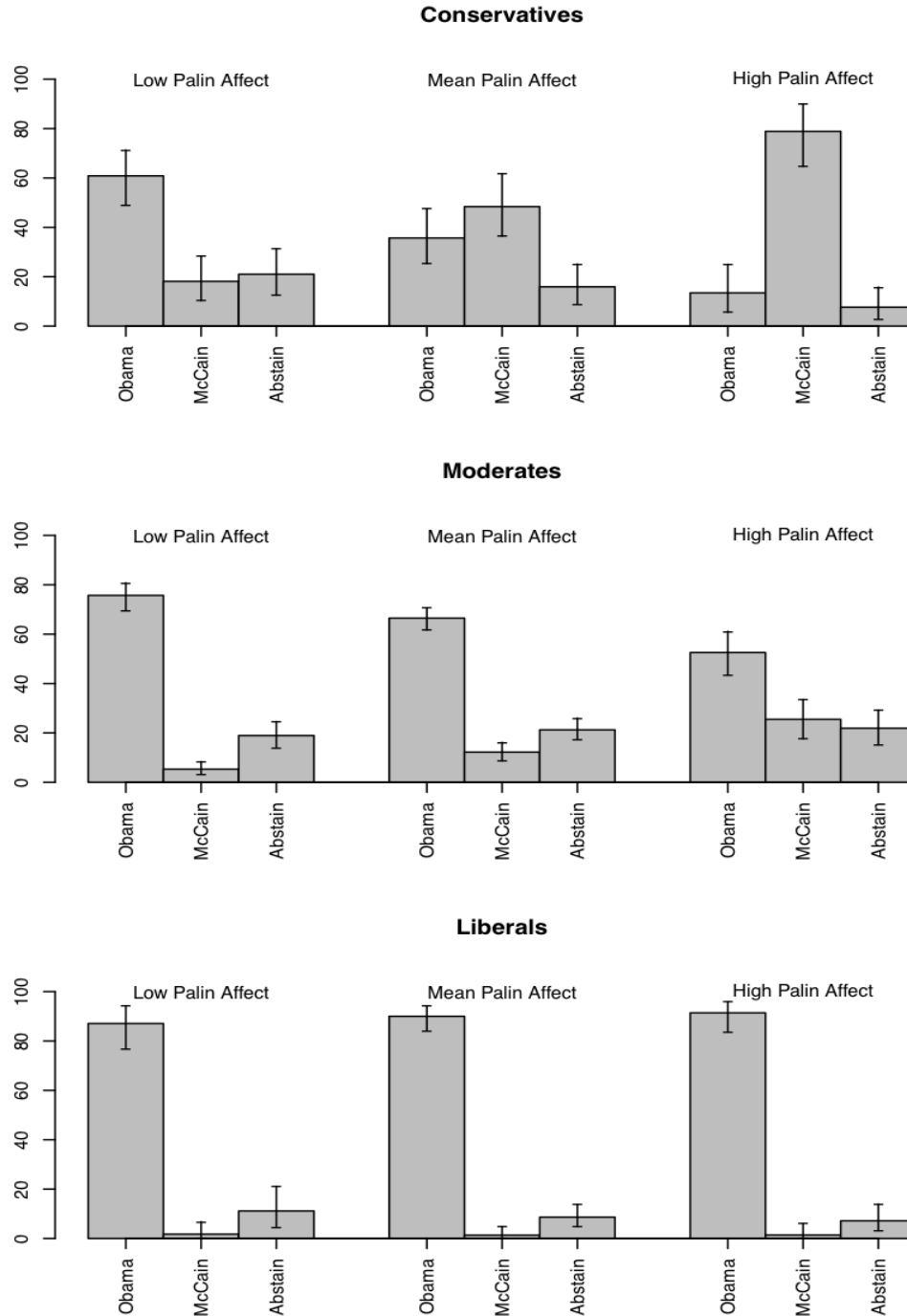
These results call into question the idea that Palin was an electoral liability for McCain. While negative assessments of Palin by moderates may have cost McCain some votes, Palin's addition to the ticket helped prevent large numbers of conservatives from sitting the election out. This is particularly of interest when I consider that on average conservatives viewed Palin positively, rating her with a 67 % favorability rating. This implies that without Palin on the ticket to entice conservatives, McCain could have experienced a far more devastating loss.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This chapter is intended to help us to better understand the effectiveness of targeting subsets of the electorate, specifically ideological partisans unhappy with a moderate presidential

⁴¹ Liberal voters' decision to turnout and vote was largely unaffected by their assessment of Palin, with affect towards Palin having no significant effect on abstention rates or on the percentage of liberal choosing to vote for McCain.

Figure 3: Effect of Palin on Reported Vote Choice/Abstention



Source: American National Election Study 2008 Post-Election Survey.

Note: Predicted probabilities estimated for voters with ambivalent affect towards McCain (reported affect = 50). All other continuous variables set at their mean and categorical variables set at their mode. Hash marks indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities reported are estimated using the Zelig software (Imai et al. 2008).

candidate. The activist base of the Republican Party is both growing in size and becoming more conservative. The evidence presented here suggests that campaigns have strategies at their disposal that will allow them to reach out to these voters and bring them to the polls, even if this segment of the electorate continues to grow. The addition of Palin to the ticket, a candidate that on average conservatives reported more favorable feelings towards than McCain, bolstered his candidacy among conservatives and prevented “abstention through alienation”. Additionally, while these tactics show promise in gaining the support of the Republican base, there appears to be limited risk that appeals focus on conservatives will drive more moderate voters from supporting the ticket. McCain’s wish that Sarah Palin would provide his ticket with much needed support from the conservative base of the Republican Party was fulfilled, even if his presidential ambitions were not.

The importance of vice presidential candidates is often debated by both the media and by political scientists. Previous academic attempts to assess the importance of vice presidential candidates have focused on the electoral effects such a candidate has on the entire electorate. It is imperative that I examine a running mate’s electoral impact on the subsection of the electorate that motivated the campaign’s selection of that running mate. Sarah Palin’s addition to the Republican ticket was widely reported to have been an attempt to bolster McCain within his own party. Consistent with the hypothesis, Palin was successful in influencing conservatives to vote for McCain. The McCain campaign’s ability to use the vice presidential nomination as an explicit messaging tool shows a successful path to future campaigns to secure the base of their parties.

The second hypothesis predicted that providing conservatives with a like-minded vice presidential nominee would increase turnout among conservatives and prevent “abstention

through alienation“. As anticipated I demonstrate that Palin had a significant and positive effect on conservatives turning out to vote and lending their support to the Republican Party. I also hypothesized that this influence should have little effect on moderates, since moderates should be less susceptible to influence from differentiated messages targeting conservatives. While Palin did have a significant effect on moderate voters, likely drawing some votes away from the McCain campaign, this effect was limited compared to the positive impact Palin had on conservative voters. These results indicate that without the selection of Sarah Palin as his running mate, dramatically fewer conservatives would have made it to the polls to vote for their party's ticket. It is also clear that this was accomplished with limited risk of counter-mobilization among moderates. These findings run counter to existing research on securing the base and spatial models of electoral behavior, and imply that explicit messages to subsets of the electorate can be effectively used to mobilize the base of the party while having a minimal effect on ideologically moderates.

Through investigating Sarah Palin's effects on conservatives, I further illustrate the need for examining these pointed mobilization strategies more effectively. This is imperative as these strategies are employed at increasing rates especially following the advent of soft money flowing freely into elections and the vast changes in the use of technology within elections (Osborn, McClurg, and Knoll 2010). McCain's choice to use the vice presidential nominee to provide a more ideologically balanced ticket, successfully appealed to the base, allowed him to maintain moderate voters, and was ultimately electorally beneficial.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This research investigates the effectiveness of campaign tactics designed to alleviate the intense pressures they are under to appeal to subgroups within the electorate. I simply ask, do these tactics work on their intended targets or do these tactics cost the campaign the support of other potential followers? I examine this broader political phenomenon through analyzing why vice presidential running mates are selected and whether or not these selections produce the desired results.

The primary and caucus season serve as an opportunity for parties to select their presidential nominees. It also provides the eventual nominee with the opportunity to be vetted by the electorate. Although the nominee was ultimately victorious in gaining the Party's overall support, they experienced successes and failures throughout the process. As a result, a clearer picture emerges as to what groups within the electorate the candidate is more inclined to build connections and what groups they are likely to struggle with to build support. Once selected, nominees face the challenge of uniting supporters behind their campaign. Candidates seek endorsements, run advertisements, perform stump speeches, carefully construct debate responses, and use technology to reach potential supporters.

Campaigns send these messages with the hope that they will encourage support and activate voters' predispositions. Often these messages must be crafted to appeal to designated groups. Sometimes those groups are considered to be in the party mainstream and are more natural for the candidate. For instance, Bill Clinton courted median voters with his more moderate stance. At other times, those groups fall into more extreme categories and serve as political gymnastics for the candidate. For example, Southerners could see right through John

Kennedy's efforts to connect with them and as a result he spent very little of his time personally trying to court them.

Existing literature lends support for the idea that it may be possible to differentiate political messages. In basic terms, this means a candidate may be able to send an explicit message, such as a television advertisement espousing their conservative stance on social issues, without turning away potential supporters who are more moderate on these issues. This occurs because people are more likely drawn to messages that align with their predispositions. Conversely, people are more likely to ignore or reject messages that do not. I test this theory through examining a type of explicit message that all presidential campaigns send. They balance their presidential ticket by selecting a targeted vice president nominee.

Presidential campaigns hope that, if chosen wisely, their vice presidential nominee will serve as a mobilization device. Tickets are balanced taking into consideration the pitfalls in appeal that the presidential nominee experienced in the primary season. The second slot is then filled with a candidate that the campaign believes will broaden their appeal. Various ticket balancing strategies are mulled over as campaigns wrestle with the list of potential vice presidential running mates in an effort to maximize their electoral impact. Although a great amount of effort goes into the selection process, we do not adequately understand the effectiveness of this pointed strategy.

Through examining the pointed influence of vice presidential nominees, this research shows us that differentiated explicit campaign messages can be effectively employed. I show that differentiated strategies can prove beneficial for a campaign and come at little to no electoral risks. In both examples, the vice presidential nominees encouraged increased support amongst their intended group and failed to produce dramatic adverse effects.

When John Kennedy selected Lyndon Johnson to solidify the Southern more conservative base of the party, he did so with risks. For starters, it was unclear whether or not voters care about the vice presidential nominee. If Southern voters failed to see Johnson's addition as an influential factor, then perhaps Kennedy's selection was amiss. If non-Southern voters were dissuaded by his addition to the ticket, this could have potentially cost Kennedy support amongst voters not targeted. The evidence presented in Chapter Four shows that Kennedy did indeed produce his desired effects. Johnson played little into the decisions for non-Southern Democrats; he positively influenced Southerner Democrats to vote for Kennedy over Nixon. Although the turnout effects were not dramatically different with Johnson's inclusion, this can be explained by the overall higher rate of voting during the 1960 election.

Sarah Palin also had a dramatic effect on voters. I hypothesized that she would benefit McCain by encouraging conservative support. As was the case with Johnson, I anticipated that her selection should not come at great risk as she should be less likely to influence moderates less disposed to connect with her. Through my analysis, I show that Palin not only gathered the support of the conservative base for the McCain campaign, but she most importantly brought them to the polls. The results show that a great deal more conservatives would have abstained from voting with the absence of Palin on the ticket. Her influence only made modest gains amongst voters located closer to the middle. This confirms the idea that through differentiating campaign messages, by balancing a party's presidential ticket, it is possible to gain support from targeted groups without great costs.

Considering these results, campaigns may find that differentiating their campaign messages in mailings, developing varied television or radio campaign commercials depending on the stations' viewership, or catering a campaign message based on the audience at a rally or

fundraising event could lead to electoral benefits. This research also supports the idea that these electoral benefits are not necessarily countered with causing voters who are not predisposed to the targeted messages to abandon their support for the ticket. In both cases examined here, the vice presidential nominee was effective in mobilizing their intended targets while for the most part maintaining original levels of support amongst groups outside of the target.

As we experience mounting pressure on campaigns and candidates at all levels to pander to polarized groups within their own parties, it becomes increasingly important to understand the effects of differentiated campaign messages. Moving beyond the scope of the candidate's campaign, this may also aid in our understanding of how campaign dollars spent by Political Action Committees and other external organizations may impact the electorate. In recent years, PAC dollars and other soft money have infiltrated elections. Unlike the candidates themselves who hope to gain elected office, these organizations have little need for accountability following the election. In other words, they may be able to pour their messages into the political atmosphere, mobilize their targeted audience, experience little adverse mobilization, and disappear after their desired results are obtained. The influence of differentiated messages sent by these external organizations during elections is one area that we need to better understand as the role these organizations play in distributing information during elections is growing dramatically.

In addition to adding to our understanding of message receptivity, this research also provides us with a nuanced approach to studying the influence of vice presidential nominees on voters. I argue that campaigns, have long used these selections as targeted electoral mobilization tools. In other words, running mates are selected to balance the party's ticket with the hopes that they provide new support.

Considering this strategy, we must also find ways to effectively measure their influence based on their intended use. Existing literature on this matter potentially devalues the critical role the vice presidential nominees plays through examining their influence across the electorate. I demonstrate the intended effectiveness of these selections through focusing on Kennedy choosing Lyndon Johnson in an attempt to mobilize Southern Democrats and John McCain's selection of Sarah Palin in an effort to ignite the conservative base. In these instances, the selections did serve to provide the ticket with the desired balance with little to no electoral costs.

These are of course only two examples of a tactic that is exercised every four years by presidential campaigns. However, these examples took place during times where political polarization was undeniable. We might expect these selections to have an even higher likelihood of sparking controversy and counter mobilization efforts by opposing groups. That simply did not occur. This demonstrates that it is possible to balance a presidential ticket and successfully differentiate messages to the electorate.

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